

# RACE

# TRAITOR

## COP WATCH



## *WE WATCH THE COPS*

number 6

summer 1996

TREASON TO WHITENESS IS LOYALTY TO HUMANITY

# RACE TRAITOR

*Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity*

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# WHITE HISTORY MONTH

BY PATRICIA EAKINS

Before we get rolling with the real story, we'd like you to fill in the questionnaire. We pay close attention to demographics. If we can't get advertisers, we're considering the non-profit route, with gala benefits and boards both working and advisory--we need to know more about your tastes and interests, beliefs and goals. In our grand drawing, you may win a trip to the Passaic Falls. And we'll customize our story product just for you!

1. Describe your heritage profile and status prognostication: \_\_\_\_

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If your job is worse than your parents', stop reading this. (It's O.K. to earn less money, but your job should be further divorced from overalls and dirty hands.)

2. Which of the following colors do you prefer? Heath \_\_\_\_\_, Raisin \_\_\_\_, Cashew \_\_\_\_, Parchment \_\_\_\_, Bisque \_\_\_\_, Citron \_\_\_\_, Herb \_\_\_\_, Desert \_\_\_\_, Thatch \_\_\_\_, Rattan \_\_\_\_.

3. What is your favorite dance company?

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4. What brand and model is your answering machine?
5. What percentage of your clothing is natural fibers?
6. What is the difference between a Stratocaster and a Stradivarius?
7. (a) Did you ever dial 970-000H? (b) Do you think the service could be improved with a modem and virtual-reality gloves? (c) What kind of underwear does artificial intelligence consider sexy? (d) Does the answer to *c* depend on the number of computer languages you are literate in?
8. What brand of water do you drink?
9. Where did you get that hair cut?
10. Do you drink beer from a glass or from a can in a twisted paper bag?
11. What are you willing to give up for the sake of the ozone layer?

When your grandparents crossed the Atlantic on a ship, which they called *the boat*, they couldn't afford a roomette. They rode in steerage under the deck, a windowless cargo hold, sitting on their Samsonite on duck boards with bilge slopping back and forth beneath them. The lucky ones had hammocks to sleep in, but no one had privacy. They had to brush their teeth in a tin cup and wait in line to use the bathroom. If they hadn't brought their own toilet paper, they had to beg the captain for some of the straw the ship was carrying for the horses of the cossacks, which ran wild out west,

where they mated with the horses of conquistadors brought over centuries earlier--but that is another story.

The cossacks had roomettes and smoked after-dinner cigars with the captain. Sometimes they raped the women in steerage, who wore babushkas to make themselves look non-funloving. When there was a storm, the cossacks' horses struggled for footing, their hooves clanging and clattering, their screaming louder than the yowling of babies writhing in the arms of mothers trying to sleep sitting up on suitcases. They stared into darkness for hours, listening to clanging hooves and sloshing bilge and the slapping of waves against the hull of the boat.

Voices murmured, the voices of restless ones telling stories or arguing with those they had left behind. And under those voices a murmur, barely audible, rose from the path the boat was taking across the sea. For even though the waters constantly moved (each droplet of the great, deep soup that covers the earth was constantly travelling in waves that crested and broke and reassembled under your grandparents' boat and other boats) still there was memory in the drenched earth beneath the sea, memory in the history of simple habitation that names and renames the soup and has been changing the earth since the birth of the first blue-green algae, the anaerobic algae that make do in the dark, as your grandparents had to when crossing in the steerage of the boat.

Staring into fetid blackness, your grandparents passed the whiney children back and forth between them--children so small and undernourished they clung to your grandparents like little possums, weeping and mewling and squirming in your grandparents' laps. The underlying murmur persisted beneath the fussing and fretting of children, beneath the cooing and preening of lovers picking lice from each others' heads, beneath the muttering of fathers, grandfathers and big uncles counting coins over and over in the dark, coins clinking and clunking as they fingered them in

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pockets. And the murmur was the echo of all the similar noises and cries made by sailors and settlers, soldiers and workers, farmers and merchants and wives and whores who had crossed the sea for centuries before. And echoing too the rapacious jawing and hooting of pirates, the groaning of joints of boats, the complaints of dipping and swaying masts in whistling and wailing storms--all these noises echoed a path through history over and through the sea. And among other noises the moans of the slaves on whose backs the lash fell slashing and stinging as creaking oars propelled the slavers' ships through the wake of the past.

Your grandparents may have been indentured servants, but they weren't slaves--or if they were, please skip to the next story, or the one after that. Oh well. Read on if you will. We didn't come here to give any of you a lecture--where were we?

Your grandparents were clutching prayer beads, pleading not to be chained to oars but to continue their journey under sail or steam, sitting peacefully in darkness munching hard tack and cheese rinds, stringing beads of garlic around their children's necks against the depredations of rats. The praying of your grandparents rose to heaven with the power and beauty of a choir of angels plucking harps at Christmas. They stroked the crosses they carried in their pockets, Catholic crosses with Jesus on them, and Protestant crosses with Jesus flown to the sky to trail the boat with sea gulls.

Grandma was glad the descendants of slaves in the U.S. of A. had been freed by Mr. Abraham Lincoln there on the field at Gettysburg, where their leg irons had been melted into ploughshares. But Grandpa had heard that ex-slaves had been forced to live in rundown houses with no running water--houses like no others in America where the streets were paved with gold. And because ex-slaves were not allowed to have library cards they had taken to playing three-card monte, listening to music that loosed their passions and wore out their shoes with dancing.

Your grandparents weren't interested in passions of any kind--not lust, not greed, not anger, not revenge. They didn't dance, and their shoes didn't wear out. Your grandparents believed in self-control, in hard work and in saving money in holes in mattresses. They believed in educating children in hard schools, particularly boys. If the music of passion were going to distract the boys from math and spelling, then your grandparents wanted the music silenced, even if that meant hanging the musicians upside down till blood drained from their ears.

1. What is the difference between a deadhead, a ballhead, and a jarhead?
2. Should pre-op transsexuals use the bathroom of their gender of origin or their gender of destination? What bathroom is appropriate for post-op transsexuals? For transvestites?
3. What percentage of government jobs should be reserved for white males?
4. Which of the following would you be willing to die for: your family? your friends? peace freedom democracy capitalism? your virginity? your religion, or your lack of religion? your wallet, sucker?
5. How many dead foreigners equal one dead American?
6. Are you going to stop whatever it is you're doing, or do we have to come back there?

Your grandparents didn't know your parents would be taught the palmer method of penmanship and spend many hours of

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each school year making long rolls of script across page after page, like rolls of barbed wire disguised as tumbleweed rolling across an endless prairie. They didn't know this barbed wire would become a fence. And they didn't know America would line up on the desert side the Negroes (even though they had become Christians); the Jews (though they were white, had crossed the Atlantic in steerage and worked hard); the Mexicans (who preferred corn meal to flour); the Chinese (who had been given work-study grants to build America's railroads but had not had the decency to return home); the Japanese (who ate seaweed and raw fish, like seals); and whooping red Indians who couldn't handle liquor. The real Americans were on the good side of the fence, the side where the water was and carrots grew, row upon row waiting to be cut into tiny cubes, mixed with peas, and frozen.

When your grandparents saw the fence separating "haves" from "have-nots," fertile land from desert, they felt a twinge of remorse. Mostly they were glad to be on the side where the irrigation was. They thought of a saying they had coined on the way across the Atlantic--"Don't rock the boat."

Sitting in the hold of the boat, munching hard tack, smoothing their children's hair back from their brows, listening to banging hooves and slopping bilge, inhaling the tarry smell of ropes, your grandparents had been haunted by ashy, premonitory voices of slaves who had died at their oars and been slipped across the gunwhales to sink unshrouded. Yet your grandparents didn't want to be seen as troublemakers even before they reached the new land or learned the new language; they said nothing.

Soon enough they walked from the hold and down the gangplank and passed through customs blinking their eyes at daylight, turning their pockets inside out so officers could see they imported no agricultural pests. They immediately started in business, picking bottle caps and candy wrappers from the gutter.



Pretty soon they pushed a wire cart from a supermarket up and down the streets, crying "Tinker, mend your pots and pans," "Rags! Old iron!" "Watermelon man!" "Ice! Ice!"

It was only a matter of time till your parents paid off the mortgage on the convenience store; they began to make a small profit selling newspapers, Coca Cola, kitty litter, greeting cards and lunch meat.

Your parents were about to trade up, adding lines of men's, ladies' and childrens' clothing, giving up lunch meat. They had purchased fireplace-tender sets as loss leaders; they were moving into storefronts adjoining their convenience store when the stock market crashed. Consumers who couldn't make payments on American Express began jumping out of windows. The rain of bodies clogged sewers and polluted rivers. The survivors fought the stench with spray deodorant, damaging the ozone layer. This lowered the air quality to an unacceptable level, so the Big Three auto manufacturers relocated to Japan, where escapees from behind the Great American Barbed-Wire Fence were setting a terrible example for tourism, trading in kimonos for pin-striped suits.

Your parents strapped your grandparents to mattresses on the roof of a Japanese-made van. They headed for Oklahoma, as did thousands of other Americans. Oklahoma had been a burger ranch, full of cattle, but the vans stampeded the cattle; they ran till they died, along with the buffalo which had once been so numerous. Oklahoma turned to a Dust Bowl from the stress of all that ranch land's being converted to a parking lot--without any blacktop--and before environmental impact had even been assessed.

In the gathering gloom, your mother tried to keep your spirits up, pretending it was a tailgate party, the roadies for Bruce Springsteen and the Grateful Dead were already stacking speakers. Your grandparents would have preferred an impromptu harmonica concert, maybe a little accordion. They wanted to eat milk toast

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sitting in lawn chairs with wet bandannas over their noses to keep down the dust. Your father said your grandparents had to be careful not to get trampled by tee-shirt vendors. They would be unstrapped from the van roof as soon as Bruce and the Dead started playing, which would be when they recovered from the influenza that was claiming hundreds of lives even if people wore gas masks so they wouldn't have to breathe poison air--even if they put mustard plasters all over their bodies. The fumes from the mustard corroded the tubes of the gas masks, attacking the nasal passages of slow learners. The mounted policemen could no longer practice effective crowd control. Several distinguished elderly persons had already been hanged as witches, their heads skewered on the antennae of CB radios. So your father thought your grandparents had better stay on top of the van, though your mother gave them sun visors.

Were your grandparents satisfied? Oh no! They made remarks about all they had sacrificed coming over on the boat--the chance to stay in Europe and starve until planeloads of American tourists--the children and grandchildren of immigrants who had crossed the Atlantic in steerage--revived the quaint customs of the past like sitting in cafés drinking licorice-flavored alcoholic beverages that made them want to spend money on postcards of the insect-ridden thatched-roof huts their ancestors had fled from. Americans toured the castles their grandparents had been servants in. Why, if only their families had stayed, they would have been promoted from servant to duke or prince!

Your grandparents strapped to the roof of the van waiting for the Dead to play with Bruce still resented losing their chance to be knighted. Some had never even received medals they had been promised for releasing the survivors from the concentration camp behind the European knock-off of the barbed-wire fence after World War II, when Christians everywhere finally acknowledged

that kosher hotdogs were superior to all others. At that time ethnobotanists created the hybrid known as "the hanukkah bush." The Judeo-Christian tradition was invented along with the seltzer bottle made famous by Clarabel the clown on the Howdy Doody show.

Now your grandparents looked out across the parking lot and saw other grandparents strapped to the roofs of vans, abused by a decline in family values. They began refusing all nutriment, food or beverage. They asked only for a little water to moisten their parched lips; once in a while your parents reached up with a sponge soaked in apple-cider vinegar.

Meanwhile you and (Check one) your (a) brother(s)? (b) sister(s)? (c) both of the above? (d) none of the above? (e) other? \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify) were fighting in the back of the van. You had been playing "Alphabet" with letters on the license plates of other vehicles parked in the lot that used to be Oklahoma. One of you said he or she had seen a Q and the other(s) was/were, to say the least, incredulous, particularly as the alleged Q claimant could no longer locate the alleged license plate. It was your word or your sibling's--a showdown.

"I've had about all I'm going to take," said the parent trying to refold a map. So the parent driving took off the parking brake and put the van in gear; you left the Dust Bowl without seeing the concert or the football game that was to follow.

"Wait!" you cried. "What about Grandma and Grandpa?"

"They'll love California," said your mother.

"California?"

"The Gold Rush," said your father.

"Water!" cried your grandparents from atop the van.

In California, your parents homesteaded; they started an orange plantation.

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"See? Lovely, lovely oranges!"

"I hate oranges," you said. And your siblings echoed. "I hate orange juice. I hate orange jello. I hate orange marmalade. I hate orange sherbet--"

"That's enough," said your father.

"Me, I hate orange life-savers," muttered Grandpa.

Your father moved your grandparents' lawn chairs out to the ends of the orange-tree rows so they could look out onto the now-electrified barbed wire fence separating desert from promised land.

"Who are those people crawling toward the irrigation ditch?" said Grandpa.

"They must think this is a public beach," said Grandma.

"Looks like they're after the oranges. Well, help yourselves, folks!"

"Those people frizzle up like burnt bacon when they touch that fence."

"If I were you I'd go back where you came from," hissed Grandpa. "Oranges cause cancer in rats." He was already nodding off.

Your grandparents dozed in their chairs while the eyes of your parents' flamingo lawn ornaments regarded them impassively, glittering in light reflected from the garrison belts of safety patrols wearing pointed hoods sewn from flowered sheets, carrying baseball bats as they converged on the mall to guard the magnet store.

12. (a) How many friends do you have from ethnic groups other than your own? How many relatives? (b) Do you believe in the same religion your parents do? Why?

13. Name a dozen nationalities of Europe.

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14. Name a dozen nationalities of the subcontinent of India:

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15. Name the principal wars among African peoples of the post-colonial twentieth century.

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16. What ethnic and gender groups is your cleaning technician a member of?

17. Your physician?

18. (a) Do you believe a plumber should earn as much per hour as an accountant? Why or why not? (b) To what ethnic groups do your plumber and your accountant belong? Does this have any bearing on your answer to the money question?

19. Would you swim in the same pool as a person with A.I.D.S.?

20. Would you eat from the same plate as a person with false teeth?

21. Do you believe the organs of electrocuted criminals should be contributed to innocent sick people, even if the crimes are of moral turpitude?

22. What is the difference between (a) orzo and ouzo? \_\_\_\_\_,  
(b) salaam and salami? \_\_\_\_\_,  
(c) mullah, mezzuzah, and medulla oblongata? \_\_\_\_\_

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23. Should teen-agers be allowed to French Kiss people of their own age? Their own gender? From their own families?

24. Who invented overdubbing?

25. What punishments are suitable for mothers who call attention to flaws in their children's bodies, listen in on their telephone conversations, go through their wallets or purses looking for birth-control devices, and make them eat foods they don't like?

Remember the first time you went to the doctor, how you cried when he or she pricked your finger and drew out blood to smear on a slide, cried even harder when she or he pricked the vein in the crook of your arm to draw out a cylinder of dark red blood? Remember asking your mother what happened to the blood after it was tested? Did they use it to replace the blood of accident victims? She said there is a huge bird bath in the middle of the Pentagon with a fountain in it; they fly the blood there. You said, What kind of birds come? She said, Crows, eagles and vultures--did you think robins?

You could recall aerial photographs of the Pentagon; what was in the angular hole at the center of its polygonal donut? Was it a giant outdoors cyclotron generating atomic particles? Was some kind of worship going on there, like at Stonehenge, with children sacrificed then memorialized on milk cartons? Your mother's explanation sounded reasonable, though she was bent out of shape because your father never ate dinner with her and you kids.

Still, she denied that she was lonely or depressed. She said, "Grandpa didn't eat with Grandma either, did he, Grandma? And Grandma wasn't lonely or depressed, was she, Grandma?"

Grandma said, No, and neither had her mother been, or her mother's mother. Women had been women, cheerful and thrifty in

aprons with bibs since God and his family created the world. Your mother was lucky to have her man, she should stop complaining about the second job painting houses he had taken to keep up their standard of living. Hadn't he tried to buy her a fur coat? ("An end-of-season sale.") And what about that diamond ring? ("To replace the Cracker Jack favor he gave me when we made the announcement.")

"Every year he buys you flowers on your anniversary and your birthday--what kind of girl turns her nose up at flowers?"

"*Some* people don't know how to mind their business."

"I know when I'm not wanted. I can take a hint. I'm going now. Don't try to stop me. I would never be a burden."

Grandma hobbled over to the fence, grabbed it in both hands and sizzled to smoke and a greasy ash in the sand.

"Now look at what you've done!" scolded Grandpa. To him your mother was still a child. He started throwing oranges at her.

"Ouch! Ouch!" she called to your father--

But he couldn't hear her. He had sneaked off to his secret bathtub where he sunk himself up to his chin in nice clean, fresh, fragrant new fives cracking like ice on a hot day. He was bathing in his fedora, smoking cigars, drinking milk spiked with vodka while he did crossword puzzles without the aid of a dictionary.

He heard the oranges thudding and splotting, your mother's shocked little cries. By the time he had wrapped himself in his towel and looked out the window, your mother had shoved your grandfather into the fence. He too frizzled like a bit of onion on a short-order cook's grill. Now there were two greasy ashes in the sand. Your mother picked them up and placed them gently in a lumpy clay pot you had made in school.

"There! Now they're at peace. We'll bury them among the orange trees they loved so well."

She stuffed into the lumpy pot with the ashes some dyed

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carnations your father had given her; she threw the pot into the irrigation ditch. "That's enough of that!" she said to Your Father, standing there in his towel. From now on, she wanted him to be a gentleman orange farmer. She didn't approve of the money he made covering structural defects of houses with paint.

As long as she had him reduced to his towel, she was confiscating his paint-splattered shoes, she said, the very look of which desecrated their home in the subdivision called Orange Grove Acres. She was confiscating his painty jeans and painty tee-shirt too. He could wear farmer's overalls with a button-down shirt and regimental tie, so he'd fit in with the reproduction horse engravings she had cut from magazines. She was going to enforce the cookie-jar rule, too. Over and over he had promised to deposit his money in the jar where she saved for rainy days, but he had barely been giving her enough for groceries, though he must be making more; he left at 5:00 in the morning, came back at 10:00 at night. If he was working all those hours, what were those "Fire and Ice" lip prints among the spatters of Antique White on his tee-shirt?

Amazing, he said, clutching his towel, how many denizens of Orange Grove Acres wanted red door trim, window trim, ceiling trim, sometimes entire rooms of red that looked like a hooker's underwear--Foreign Underwear. Your father preferred the white paint, like white underpants on a high-school cheerleader you only see when she jumps, but what could he do? Sometimes homeowners asked for red.

Ha, said Your Mother, pulling off your father's towel. "If you believe that Disney stuff, you'll believe anything."

They embraced.

"What about my finger?" you said.

"Your what?"

"Finger and the crook of my arm where--"

But your mother and your father were busy.



26. (a) In the scene where Jesus builds his cross without the use of power tools, his loins are encased in what brand of jeans? And his mom's? (b) Would he smoke Marlboro? His mom Virginia Slim?
27. (a) Would you rather buy a used car from Ted Koppel, Yo-Yo Ma, Sandra Day O'Connor or Lech Walesa? (b) Do you think Mr. Koppel wears a hairpiece? (c) Would it affect your consumer decision if you did?
28. Remember playing kissy-face with the dog, letting him lick your lips and stick his cold wet nose between your teeth? Remember your mother saying, "Do you know where that dog's nose has *been?*"
29. What is the principal difference between Billie Holliday, Billy the Kid, Billy Budd, Billy Graham, Billy Idol, Billy Crystal and Billy Club?
30. What musical comedy song other than "Oklahoma" would you choose to be our new national anthem?

Your father was more and more worried about his heart. He was trying to calm it with deep breathing so he wouldn't have an attack from (Choose one) (a) the very sight of you, young man, in your \$500 silk tweed sportcoat over faded black Fruit-of-the Loom; (b) the very sight of you, young woman, in your assymetric haircut and your faux-leopard tights. You were wearing a diamond in one of your pierced ears and a skull in the other, smoking a hand-rolled cigarette, which made you feel much better about your finger. You told your father you believed in wire-rimmed spectacles but not in God or war, whereupon he slapped you. You fell to the floor and sustained severe injuries to the innermost parts of your brain.

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That's when you grew up. You forgot about your finger and became (a) a crystal therapist specializing in past-life regression healing, (b) a college professor of market rhetoric teaching English as a second language to graduates of midwestern high schools studying to become food-service salespersons, (c) a real-estate broker and part-time masseuse, (d) an unemployed electrical engineer working as a cab driver who plays "singing strings" over four speakers and deodorizes the inside of the cab with a pine-tree shaped air freshener that dangles from the rear-view mirror, (e) other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify).

When your own kids were old enough, you took them to Europe. They didn't want to see any moldy old castle--they weren't interested in the boat your grandparents had taken to America. They didn't even want to see Abbey Road, where that famous picture of the Beatles kissing Imelda Marcos was taken. They wanted to find the grave of an obscure Parisian poet named Viele-Griffin, an American who shoved the besandalled Alexandrine foot off the throat of the prostrate French verse and replaced it with the embalmed foot of Walt Whitman in a Nike cross-training shoe.

A kid like that drinks mango nectar, not rum 'n coke, and plays soccer, not American football. There is nothing to get him or her for Christmas. He or she doesn't want an army-surplus camouflage cap, doesn't want an umbrella with Ralph Lauren's logo, doesn't want a deck of ornamental tarot cards, doesn't want a Statue-of-Liberty paperweight. All you can give him or her is a rubbing from the grave of Frederic Chopin, or maybe Kafka, or even Gertrude Stein. Something from the Europe of statues blackened by auto exhaust and whitened by pigeon droppings that has nothing to do with your conviction that the next century belongs to the ones who live in packing crates on the desert side of the barbed-wire fence and steal juice for their TVs. They have

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tunneled under the wire and are snaking on their bellies across the black plastic keeping weeds down between crop rows in the fields of the Promised Land Corporation (black plastic like the trash bags in which infantry-persons come home from combat). Automatic weapons raised above their heads, they're carefully fording irrigation ditches, drawn to the magnet stores in the Orange Grove Acres mall, which they plan to liberate once and for all.

# COPWATCH

BY SELENA AND KATRINA

Anti-Racist-Action is a Minneapolis youth-oriented direct action group that fights racism on three different fronts. We confront organized racists/fascists like the Klu Klux Klan and neo-nazi skinheads. We hold counter demonstrations whenever they try to organize. We fight institutional racism created by the state. We do coalition work and have banners, speakers, and people at the demonstrations protesting racist, sexist, homophobic legislation like the crime bill, welfare reform and anti-choice, anti-queer, and anti-immigrant initiatives.

Anti-Racist Action Copwatch has been going out every other Friday or Saturday night for eight months. Our "beat" is on Hennepin Avenue from 9th to 5th Streets in downtown Minneapolis. We have also taken Copwatch to the West Bank, and intend to expand to other areas of the city. Besides watching the police, we talk to people, and hand out information about ARA and what to do if they are arrested. During arrests and traffic stops, we are witnesses to police conduct and intervene as much as possible. When we are loud and threatening enough, the police sometimes will let the person they were arresting go and focus their attention on us.

We carry a camera and often a video camera to remind police that their actions are not going unnoticed. It also gives the people walking around downtown the message that the police need to be watched. If people realize the cops' authority can be questioned they will be willing to question it themselves. It helps build

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the already existing anti-cop culture. Also, it's a great way to piss off the cops.

Although it's not only white folks who do Copwatch, we are predominantly white. Being seen as "white" can be an advantage. We can get away with things cops would never tolerate from people of color, such as taunting and yelling at them. It is important for white folks to take a stand against the cops, to show we are not all loyal to this oppressive system. A part of what we are doing is trying to shift the repression by police away from African-American teenagers onto us.

We are not the first group of people to realize that cops need to be watched. People have been randomly observing and interfering with police activity since cops have been abusing their authority (always!). The Black Panthers were the first group to organize people specifically to watch the pigs. At that time it was illegal to carry guns as long as they weren't concealed, so the Panthers armed themselves to defend their neighborhoods from police violence and harassment. Huey Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party, also armed himself with intricate knowledge of the laws, so he could come back at the cops when they lied about the people's rights. The Panthers proved that standing up to the police and preventing brutality is self-defense.

Anti-Racist Action recognizes the police force as one of the most oppressive institutions in many people's lives, especially people of color and working class people. It's hard to find anyone who hasn't been harassed, arrested, or assaulted by the police. For people of color, especially young men, it isn't even a question of whether or not it's happened, but how many times. ARA sees taking a stand against cops as a move against a type of racism that is slightly more disguised than nazi skinhead violence but is actually more concrete and real. Being beaten up by a nazi is fucked up but at least it's not allowed and encouraged by the law.

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The racism and harassment we see from the pigs is blatant. For instance, a group of drunk white men in business suits can stumble along downtown harassing women and "disturbing the peace." What do the police do? Nothing. But any group of African American or Native American men or women will get threatened with detox or jail if they stand on a corner too long. It is just so damn obvious what the pigs' agenda is. They aren't even subtle about it.

The cops do not enjoy our bi-weekly presence. At first they tolerated us. It's crazy how deep white privilege goes... that five white people standing around wearing signs and passing out literature that says "WE'RE ANTI-COP" are still less of a threat to police than five black teenagers just hanging out. But as we kept coming around and kept fucking with them, the pigs decided we had had enough privileges.

One night Selena got a jaywalking ticket for starting to enter the crosswalk on a green light after the 'don't walk' sign had started flashing. Just before that happened, MC was held against the wall and searched. He was cited for Unlawful Assembly. The up side of this is that the cops were retaliating because we had intervened in a search of another man, which they let go in order to harass us. The cops were paying us attention instead of fucking with, and possibly assaulting or wrongfully arresting this other man... which is what we want to happen. This man shook my hand and said "thanks" before he walked off.

Some of the different violations the cops have threatened us with, or cited us for are: loitering, littering, obstruction of a walkway, crosswalk bullshit, unlawful assembly, public nuisance. Also, when we have been harassed, the pigs have asked us for our identification, which in itself is fucked up. (Legally, we do not have to show the police our license unless we are operating a motor vehicle. People do need to have I.D. with them if they are arrested,

but not otherwise. You do need to provide them only with this information: name and address.) Many of these misdemeanors are written in such a vague way that the pigs have the power to turn any situation they don't like into an "unlawful" situation.

The same man (MC) who was cited for Unlawful Assembly was arrested at an unrelated demonstration by one of the cops we regularly get in confrontations with. As the cop was taking MC away, he said, "How does it feel... now I am watching you?"

The cops also enjoy insulting us through the loudspeakers on their squad cars, saying things like, "Get a life" or "Get a real job." One time we saw them pull over a rich white couple, as we rushed over to observe, the cops announced, "Sorry, Copwatch, they're white."

Response from the public has varied. From time to time, we have had folks join us on the spot. One man, Greg, was totally into Copwatch and asked questions and offered amazing insight. The majority of people in support of us were younger people and African American folks. One response that we didn't expect was the perception of us being a Lefty-Vigilante group, in support of the pigs! When we approached or were approached by folks, many asked, "So...are you for or against the police?" We quickly learned that we needed to take a different approach. Next time out we were saying, "Hey, what's up? We're anti-cop, with Copwatch," or simply, "Hi, we're anti-cop."

The majority of working class white folks, already pitted against each other and against people of color, are seriously cop-friendly. The response to us by yuppie men and women is nil. They don't see us, they don't hear us.

Many people of color asked the questions, "So, what are you really going to do?" and "What exactly will we do without cops?" Those are both tough fucking questions and are hard to answer in a nutshell to interested passersby.

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Abolishing police is the ultimate goal, but this can't happen within the system as it is set up now. If we had a free society, white supremacy and capitalism would sink and we'd have no need for the police. But until we have liberation for all people, police will remain, but these pigs should not be able to exist without fierce resistance, accountability and scrutiny of their "system." So what we're doing now is not only watching the pigs and holding them accountable for their racist and brutal actions, we also write and distribute our ideas, expose and tell truths about the police and system, and try and connect with the public. By offering folks these different "radical" ideas and theory we hope to educate people and spark their resistance to the system.

Copwatch does have lots of work ahead. Besides continuing to think theory and strategy and continuing to do more outreach, Copwatch also needs more bodies to be out in the streets. We also need to learn the laws as they apply to us. The pigs use tactics to discourage us, to cost us time and money, to intimidate or discredit us. If Copwatch people are aware and have the criminal codes memorized or printed on cards they carry with them, we can be more knowledgeable, i.e., threatening, to the police.



COPWATCH RATED  
NUMBER EIGHT ON  
POLICE FEDERATION  
LIST OF  
"1994 TOP TEN  
COP BASHERS"

From The Minneapolis Federation of  
Police Officers Newsletter, *Show-Up*

"8) COPWATCH - In case you haven't seen them, they are that nameless, faceless group that prowls Hennepin Ave. looking for police abuse. Emblazoned with shirts and jackets with the words, "cop watch." These self-proclaimed guarantors of government-free harassment, piously put blinders on drug deals, panhandlers, drunks, thieves and prostitutes in order to monitor the real scourge on society - the cops! Their presence, obviously encourages tourism and visits to downtown by the suburbanites, as they can rest assured that they will be safe from police abuse - unlike legions of their kind before the advent of COP WATCH."

# MEMORIES OF THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

BY BETH HENSON

## I

I attended my first civil rights demonstration in 1961 when my dad joined the NAACP in Salt Lake City. We gathered at the capitol building during a vote on school desegregation and formed two silent lines, from the heavy doors to the legislative chambers, under the rotunda with its paintings of stage coaches and sagebrush and down the broad stairs. When the doors finally opened (we had lost) we stayed at our places while the legislators moved between us, white men all, in expensive topcoats, avoiding our eyes and looking forward to supper.

In the car my dad began to sing and we all joined in. *Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home, swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home.*

Camping in Yellowstone with my family, I went for an after-dinner walk and joined a circle of singers around a campfire. Those were the days of the freedom songs and the hootenanny, of Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, and Buffie St. Marie.

I joined the Unitarian Church and their youth group. We invited speakers, the two boys from Utah who took part in Mississippi Freedom Summer. They had travelled a long way from the valley's bland, well-nourished conformity and bore the aura of a dangerous quest; they spoke of fear on country roads and the courage of black church women.

*Beth Henson is associate editor of Race Traitor.*

Friday nights we went to the Joe Hill House, a shelter by the train tracks run by an old Catholic Worker organizer, Ammon Hennessy. We sprawled on the floor with our coats on and he lectured us on strikes he had seen and then Utah Phillips, the Golden Voice of the Great Southwest, would haul out his guitar and lead us in song. *Oh, the banks are made of marble, with a guard at every door. And the vaults are lined with silver that the poor have sweated for.* The residents – we called them bums – stayed in the parlor and stared at us from behind Utah's back.

We would make out on the way home, bundled in the dark back seats of cars.

In 1964 I met Julie (who was calling herself jew in sympathy for the outsider). She took me home and showed me her books: Dostoevski, Pound, Eliot, Sartre. Together we read *Prufrock*, swooning over the lines, "I grow old, I grow old, I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled." Together we discovered *Howl* and the small collection of poetry books from City Lights and New Directions; we read Diane di Prima; we called each other after school to read Patchen and Creeley over the phone; we were the first beatniks at our respective schools.

I acquired an all-black outfit, slimming and chic; my mother threw it away.

We met Perry, a practicing Zen Buddhist, a college dropout from Kansas, who walked downtown every day to study Chinese characters above a chop suey joint in Japantown. We met his roommate who slept all day and played bass at a downtown club, and Randall, a poet who drank bottles of cough syrup for the codeine it used to contain.

We would meet in the perpetual gloom of Perry's attic apartment, with Pip, who later married Randall and had a child named Rain and then divorced him as a hopeless junkie and became an instructor for the Maharishi.

By the time I entered high school, I was ready to run away and live in a bare fifth-floor walkup where the sun came through a grimy window to illuminate a jar of wildflowers placed on the stove. I skipped school as often as I attended and attended only to meet my friends, girls who wrote poetry, boys with long hair. We began buying pot from Mexican dealers on the west side and listened to the Beatles (*Turn off your mind, relax and float down stream, it is not dying*) while incense burned and we lay back on cushions in darkened rooms in our parents' basements.

I lost my virginity to a drifter with velvety eyes and a thin nervous build; he used to tell me he loved me so much he wanted to carry me with him as a woman with child, unaware that I, too, had read *Lolita*. I led him to a local commune and they let him sleep on the back porch; we fucked ecstatically for a week and then he disappeared for good; I waited till evening and learned that he had stolen \$300 from his hosts.

1966: the first Be-In was held in Golden Gate Park, and in Salt Lake City, Ken Kesey parked his magic bus by Temple Square and gave away LSD. Coltrane and black turtleneck sweaters were out; we wore bright colors, silk shirts with broad sleeves and old velvet dresses, ribbons fastened around our necks with Victorian brooches; we wore paisley miniskirts and capes and listened to the Grateful Dead and Country Joe and the Fish.

The Cream were playing the Avalon Ballroom in San Francisco; we drove 700 miles over the Nevada desert and arrived at dawn in the city of love, slept on someone's floor and woke up at dusk to stroll through the Haight.

So many beards, so many beads. Posters from the Straight Theater, panhandlers, tourists, bikers, entrepreneurs, runaways, dresses made from Indian bedspreads, leather fringe, tie-dye and sandals. I felt provincial, I was used to knowing all the freaks in town. At the concert I was overcome by dizziness, the swirling

lights and undulating dancers; I had smoked too much, eaten too little, I went outside and walked around. I swore to return to the city of love.

Back in Salt Lake City, I took LSD the last night of Christmas break my senior year of high school in an unoccupied apartment and tried to keep warm by lighting the oven and climbing between the mattress and box spring to sleep, then had breakfast at Dennys where I tried to figure out if I looked "normal" after a night of visual hallucinations.

I cut out after math and finished high school with a GED six years later.

At my friend Carmen's, a crate of peyote had arrived from Texas and was being pulverized and cooked up; I had a strong stomach and chewed it raw a long time then went out to the little bare dirt yard where I sat till the sun went down and then moved inside and lay on the couch and stared at a mandala on the wall. At midnight I walked home through the fragrance of a spring night, and the primordial valley floor rose up to greet me through the pavement and hedges and houses.

The day I turned 18, I moved to a former mining town in the nearby mountains with my lover, John, and rented the last house on Main Street for \$35. It was a miner's shack with two bedrooms, a clawfooted bathtub, and a backyard where John grew carrots.

A friend from high school paid a visit, dressed in a velvet gown. I was so envious, in my wornout homemade muslin shift; she let me try it on and I was pretending it was mine when John brought me the first harvest, a clump of dirty roots which he tossed into my lap. I threw them in his face and burst into angry tears. Then I hitchhiked down the mountain and all the way to San Francisco.

I met Caspar, an organic farmer from Vermont, who'd left

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the farm in care of his sons and come west to talk about compost. He ate a can of sardines every day. I lived with him till John came and got me, then I left Caspar without notice, abandoning the room we had shared with two other couples.

We joined Carmen in a commune on Fell Street near Fillmore. We loved to walk Fillmore Street on a Saturday night with the rib shops and families sitting out on stoops; John was light on his feet and led me invisibly through the crowd, moving in time to the beat.

Viet Nam was in the headlines every day; we never read the paper.

We were poor, I had one pair of shoes and went around barefoot. Together we bought bags of flour, oatmeal, soybeans, brown rice, then took up daily collections for cooking oil and vegetables.

In Berkeley I spent the afternoon with an old friend in a dim bar where the beer was cheap and the TV broadcast the World Series; we talked about tarot cards and the Kabbala, and how much more relaxed California was than Salt Lake City, then stepped outside in a beery fog to find tear gas canisters exploding on campus and wet paper towels thrust in our hands.

Later we lived across the street from the public library on Page Street near Golden Gate Park; Carmen made draperies of crimson velvet for the living room and kept them closed, turning our common room into a subterranean cavern with the eye of Gurdjieff staring down from the mantel.

John drove a taxi and I took care of a girl in a whole-body cast; she'd had spinal surgery, I sat with her while her mother worked downtown, brought her lunch and a bedpan and sold her grass which we'd smoke in the afternoon. She subscribed to *Rolling Stone*, together we read about the Plaster Casters, who made casts of the genitals of rock stars. We looked at each other's faces

through a mirror.

When John got home, he would soak in the tub while I'd read to him from Ouspenski's *The Fourth Way*.

## II

Was I a race traitor or just another tie-dye hippie? One thing for certain: I was utterly, ineluctably opposed to official society, a one hundred percent dropout, willing to roll my cigarettes from Bull Durham and live on oatmeal and brown rice and welfare commodities and what I could earn charting horoscopes and selling lids. Having rejected the burdens of being white, I was willing to do without the privileges, too: regular wages, easy credit, cheap higher education. But I could have dropped back in at any time. Most of my generation did.

It was not primarily the racism of official society that I abhorred; it was its soullessness, its hypocrisy, the sacrifice of the here-and-now for abstract goals like security or prestige, the tedium of the daily commute to a nine-to-five job, toiling in the company of like-minded Babbitts to pay for the cinderblock apartment with wall-to-wall carpeting and built-in cupboards in a so-called safe neighborhood, with parking downstairs for the modest but late-model Ford. I wanted poetry and I wanted leisure: I wanted to observe a moment of stillness, watching the sun come up and go down. *I won't grow up, I don't wanna go to school, just to learn to be a parrot and recite a silly rule.*

I hated the war, identified with its victims, and said yes to boys who said no. I did not know a single person who had volunteered for the draft, and the ones who were drafted against their will came back in a matter of months with dishonorable or "crazy" discharges. The handful of guys who'd done their time were the focus of morbid curiosity. I -- we -- hated the war because it

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was murder and destruction, bootcamp and buzz cuts, because it pitted "us" against "them." As to the details of its origins and progress, I knew nothing; I never read the paper and don't recall the Tet offensive, as one example, though I did join in the massive demonstrations against the bombing of Cambodia in May, 1970.

As for the black movement, mostly we stayed out of its way while we followed the siren call of self-realization. Our pacifist sensibilities were offended by its growing militancy and the flourishing of shotguns. Some of us felt rejected by the integrationist movement we'd grown up with. We heeded Stokley Carmichael's 1967 injunction to abandon the movement to its rightful proponents, while ignoring his demand that we work in our own communities.

We did not demonstrate because we were above it all, we were at work creating a new world within the old, not for us the committee meetings and mimeograph machines and maneuvering of political activity. We were the real anti-war movement, and we were millions around the world. Without us governments would dissolve into dust; we held up half the sky.

But were we race traitors? We emulated the Indian, decking ourselves out in beads, fringe, headbands, and face paint; we forsook the God of the Old and New Testament and prayed to various anthropomorphic spirits; we joined the Native American Church and took peyote; we devoted ourselves to handicrafts. We abandoned the cities and moved into teepees on small plots of land, laboriously cultivated without machinery. We bartered among ourselves, we attempted to live without cash in a vernacular economy. We refused to go to war.

We also emulated the Negro, for our idea of the Negro, sexually uninhibited, gifted in music and dance, a rebel, a hipster, the epitome of cool, a race ennobled by suffering. We identified with the outcast: black sheep, white Negroes. We also competed for low-



income housing in the ghetto, moving a dozen or so adults into a three-bedroom flat, where our adherence to voluntary poverty, free love and exotic costume was considered mocking and offensive by most of our neighbors.

We and the black movement were going in opposite directions: freedom for us meant turning our backs on our parents and their way of life. We were on an inner journey away from affluence (*tune in, turn on, drop out*), while the black movement was advancing on the world with some very material demands, including the right to some of the affluence we were rejecting and the right to have their families respected. They were fortifying their community and proclaiming pride in their roots while we were denouncing ours as unjust, warmongering, and consumption-driven.

So were we race traitors? The police thought so. Long hair, beads and granny dresses were a badge of defiance understood by all sides, and provoked murderous rage on more than one occasion; white skin was not much protection for hippies and draft-dodgers. Black people understood, as well, that we posed no threat to them; "no hippie ever beat up no black man." The cops knew what we were about: we could spend our days picking flowers in Golden Gate Park and our nights making love by candlelight, we were still enemies of the state.

We did not need to march to oppose the war; we did not need diversity training to undermine white supremacy. By refusing to play the part of loyal whites, no matter how silly the specifics of our rebellion, we mounted a threat to capitalist rule. That the end of the draft meant the end of the party and we allowed ourselves to drift back into respectability, the caring professions, and private school for our children does not obscure our accomplishment: for one brief shining moment, we were race traitors.

If you don't believe me, ask a pig.

# DISCUSSION: OTHER RACES

## OPPOSES RACIAL DUALITIES

**Editors' Note:** The following review was published in *Transgressions: A Journal of Urban Experience*. It was written by the editor, Alastair Bonnett. *Transgressions* is published at the Geography Department, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, England NE1 7RU. The U.S. cost is \$25 for one year (two issues).

*Race Traitor*, a new journal from America, will startle and impress even the most self-satisfied cynic. Panegyric doesn't come easily to me. Yet, although far from being beyond criticism (of which more later), *Race Traitor* is, I believe, a publication of immense importance, originality and courage

Its sub-title, 'Treason to Whiteness is Loyalty to Humanity', sums up its project: to critique and oppose the racial category of 'whiteness'. An editorial in the issue under review explains,

Two points define the position of *Race Traitor*: first, that the "white race" is not a natural but a historical category; second, that what was historically constructed can be undone. (p108)

To this end *Race Traitor* gathers together scholarly histories, personal biographies and interview material with contemporary activists. The highlights of the latest issue include a nicely nuanced piece by Christopher Day on the links between racism and homo-

phobia and, by extension, what he calls 'race treason and queer liberation'. Noel Ignatiev's historical piece on the political vision of early white labour movement activists, such as Seth Luther and George Evans, is also a useful, if at times simplistic, exposition. Ignatiev's basic thesis, that American white working-class radicalism disabled its own revolutionary ambitions by positioning whiteness as central to its self-identity, may be familiar (increasingly so thanks to the work of David Roediger and Theodore Allen) but detailed historical studies of how this process worked (or works) in practice remain all too scarce.

Ignatiev's article is useful for another reason. For it will considerably assist non-American readers make some historical sense of *Race Traitor's* own political ambitions. The historical burden of the American left, the burden that *Race Traitor* is attempting to lift, is, after all, precisely the process Ignatiev identifies: the destructive impact white racial consciousness has had, and continues to have, upon working-class solidarity. Within the critical optic of the contributors to *Race Traitor*, whiteness and socialism are construed as antithetical projects. Or, as one of the journal's editors phrases it, "we will never have true democracy so long as we have a 'white community'" (p125).

The basic premise of *Race Traitor* is highly appealing for those committed to drawing white identity into a deconstructive critique of the concept of 'race' (despite the fact that the editors throw out, without explanation, an ill-judged dismissal of deconstruction, see p115). However, its rootedness in the American situation creates two major problems, problems which endanger the journal's enterprise and seriously undermine its potential international impact. These are, a) an homogenization of whiteness, and b) a romanticization of Blackness. Linking these problems lies a recognizable, and increasingly redundant, trait of American 'race' commentary, namely a fetishistic attachment to the 'Black/white'

race axis. Racial identity (both white and non-white) has mutated in recent years, and the racial dynamics of American life (especially in areas with substantial Spanish-speaking populations) have changed, in ways that the editors of *Race Traitor* simply cannot afford to ignore. In Britain, where the dualism of Black and white was, in large measure, imported from the States in the 1960s and crudely imposed on a dynamic and complex 'racial situation' (an interesting example of cultural colonialism that awaits its historian), anti-racists have become increasingly skeptical of attempts to homogenize and romanticize white people's Other as an eternally 'resisting', forever 'militant', Black mass. This is seen by many now as a manipulatively unreflexive and oppressive re-presentation, one that says as much about the attempts of inner-city radicals to make sense of a situation that increasingly escapes their ideological apparatus as it does about the complex, fractured and contradictory realities of urban conflict and solidarity.

It needs to be noted here that *Race Traitor's* project is not merely to destroy whiteness but to enable whites to 'assimilate' Blackness. Of course, Blackness too is seen as a social construction. But it is construed as a construction that needs, for strategic reasons, to be supported and reproduced. The editors argue that,

when whites reject their racial identity, they take a big step towards becoming human. But may that step not entail, for many, some engagement with blackness, perhaps even an identification as 'black'? Recent experience, in this country and elsewhere, would indicate that it does. (p115)

The rationale of this position is clearly political, recognizing as it does the different socio-economic positions whites and Blacks hold in Western societies. Accusations that *Race Traitor* is, somehow, not being 'fair', because it doesn't wish to destroy Blackness in the

same way it wishes to destroy whiteness, must thus be judged somewhat naive. In other respects, however -- and in the context of the two points of criticism made above -- the attempt to instate Blackness in the place of whiteness, is clearly problematic. It relies on both an erasure of the multiplicity and mutability of the racial positions that currently exist and on a romantic construction of Blackness, a construction that has more of the hall-marks of political desperation than rigorous and unsentimental critique.

So, in conclusion, *Race Traitor*, is a marvellous yet flawed project. It is worthy of support and worthy of the \$20 (4 issues) subscription price. It's worthy too of constructive critique. I just hope it doesn't become too set its ways, too attached to one particular 'party-line', and too parochially American, to prevent it from fulfilling the central role within contemporary political debate that it deserves.

## LESS BINARY VIEW NEEDED

**Editors' Note:** The following was sent as a letter to *Race Traitor*. The writer is Naoko Shibusawa, a graduate student in History at Northwestern University.

I was excited to discover that a journal like *Race Traitor* exists -- for people who care passionately about the deplorable state of race relations in this country and who care to see change in their everyday lives. I'm glad that *Race Traitor* is not a strictly academic journal since I know from experience the gaping difference between intellectual talk about race in the abstract and personal action in one's associations with other people.

But I'm still looking for more works on relations *among* the different races that comprise the US. The two issues of your journal

I've seen (nos. 4 and 5) seem concerned almost exclusively with black/white relations. It seems to me that most works on race relations (whether for academe or the general public) focus on relations between two races -- usually between blacks and whites, but sometimes between other nonwhite groups and whites. The binary, white/nonwhite focus makes sense given white dominance in this country and European dominance in the world in the last few centuries, but it oversimplifies the dilemma of race relations.

Asian Americans (and Latino/as and Native Americans), to a degree dependent on their class, suffer from white privilege while also gaining from what I call non-black privilege for lack of a better term. Other Americans, African American included, give Asian Americans respect for their putative diligence and "school smarts," but they also see Asians as technocrats, uncreative, imitative, and lacking leadership qualities. Euroamericans routinely deny their fellow citizens of Asian ancestry tenure or promotions into the upper echelons of power and status. At the same time, however, middle-class Asian Americans don't suffer the humiliation of having their fellow citizens see them as potentially violent criminals or "welfare queens." Attracting relatively little attention from the authorities and freedom from police harassment is a privilege they can count on almost every day.

Institutionalized racism in the US, in other words, is much more complex than a black and white issue. Euroamericans need to examine their racial prejudice about other minorities. A friend, currently a fellow at an institute for African American studies, is horrified to see Euroamericans who pride themselves for their sensitivity to black issues treat Asians as second-class citizens and third-rate scholars. The African Americans there, she says, treat the Asians just as badly as the Euroamericans.

Asian Americans, for their part, largely seem to be unaware of their role in perpetuating institutionalized racism. I think most

Asian Americans have a rather vague sense they have privileges denied to African Americans, but all too many fail to examine it further and to work toward eliminating this inequity. If you get the chance, please read David Mura's "Re-X-aminig the No-No-Boy" in *The New England Review* (summer 1993). It's an autobiographical essay that recounts how Mura gave up trying to be "white" and came to embrace an alliance with other people of color and some "race traitors." This essay, perhaps abridged, would be perfect for publication in your journal, I think.

Please consider my request for a less binary view of race relations. Thank you for your journal. Its existence encourages me.

### THE EDITORS REPLY

We thank both writers for the kind things they said about *Race Traitor*. They raise an important issue, and we are happy to be able to discuss it in a congenial atmosphere.

From the first number of *Race Traitor*, in which we wrote that the only alternative to the white race is the human race, critics have said we oversimplify the race problem. The U.S., they have pointed out, is not constructed on a bipolar model but is multi-racial.

In spite of the critics, we hold to our original view. We are aware that there are people in America who partake of some of the privileges of the white skin while experiencing some of the social restrictions imposed on black people. But we think that those who argue that these people constitute intermediate "races" misunderstand how race operates.

From the start it is necessary to distinguish between race and ethnicity. They do not occupy the same analytic space and do not exist on a continuum. Ethnicity deals, at least symbolically, with culture; race is an assigned status. The distinction can perhaps

be best illustrated by pointing out that black people and traditional southern "whites" share a common speech, religion, music, cuisine, and even ancestry, and probably resemble each other culturally more than any other two groups in the country; ethnically they are one, yet they are divided along "race" lines. At the same time two of the most distinctive ethnic groups in the country are the Hasidic Jews of New York and the Amish of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania; yet in neither case has their insistence on maintaining their unique cultures prevented them from enjoying all the rights and immunities of "whites."

The U.S. is a capitalist society. As in any capitalist society the population consists largely of two classes, the masters and the slaves. In this country, unfortunately, many of the slaves think they are masters because they enjoy the privileges of the white skin.

The privileges of whiteness extend to the lowest members of the white race, who enjoy a status higher, in certain respects, than that of the most exalted persons excluded from it. Not long ago there was an incident in Boston in which a well-dressed black man hailed a taxi and directed the driver to take him to his home in Roxbury, a black district. The cab driver, a white woman, refused, and when the man insisted she take him or call someone who would, as the law provided, she called her boyfriend, also a cabdriver, who showed up, dragged the man out of the cab and called him a "nigger." The black man turned out to be a city councilman. The case was unusual only in that it made the papers. Either America is a very democratic country, where cabdrivers beat up city councilmen with impunity, or the privileges of whiteness reach far down into the ranks of the laboring class.

The white-skin privilege system does not require that all whites be treated the same; everyone knows that ethnic groups vary in wealth and status. It demands only that enough people identify their interests with those of the "white race" to prevent effective



proletarian class solidarity. It thus polarizes the country into two "races": those who enjoy the privileges of whiteness, and those who do not. Just as a "mixed" neighborhood has traditionally meant the interval between the first black person moving in and the last white moving out, so the intermediate position of various groups reflects a moment when their racial status is being determined.

In the history of this country, racial status has proven quite flexible: before the Civil War, the "white" population consisted largely of those of Protestant English descent; with the arrival of large numbers of Scandinavians, Germans, and Catholic Irish, the "white race" was broadened to include all those of northern European stock; later on, immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were incorporated into it, making "white" roughly synonymous with European. For most of U.S. history, people from Asia, Africa, the islands of the sea, and countries in the western hemisphere south of the Rio Grande were the victims of what looked very much like racial oppression, treated as inferiors in a caste system that gave meaning to the term "people of color."

A lot of this has changed. Children of Chinese, Ethiopian, and Haitian immigrants now grow up in America with the same advice Irish, Polish, and Italian parents gave their children in past generations: the way to succeed in the new country is to keep away from the black Americans. (The children don't always listen, but that is another story.) The "white race" is being recomposed, just as in the nineteenth century, and just as at that time boundaries are not always clear and there are regional variations.

Various programs facilitate the recomposition. ESL programs, one of the chief vehicles for allowing immigrants to leap over black Americans, are not restricted to Europeans. Other mechanisms function through the "private" sector. The *New York Times* of March 11, 1996 carries an op-ed piece by Roger Waldinger detailing some of the ways immigrants win out over black Ameri-

cans in the job search. It identifies personal reference networks, which bypass the open market, as the key. The result, for example, is that less than three percent of all workers in New York City's garment industry are black Americans.

In this country, existing social relations are compatible with democratic forms only so long as the privileges of race embrace most of the population. Without majority support, the regime would rest predominantly on naked force -- like South Africa under apartheid or the South before the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of the mid-1960's -- a precarious situation for those who govern. The periodic transformation of people from racially oppressed to *ethnics* is vital to the recomposition of a "white" majority.<sup>1</sup> For years people have been predicting, some with glee, others with alarm, that by such-and-such year California (or some other state) will have a "non-white" majority. Both the proponents and opponents of this future can relax: the day California has a non-white majority is the day the present basis of rule collapses, because the Los Angeles Rebellion of 1992 will become general and sustained.

A great deal of the quarrel about "intermediate" or "other" races has to do with determining who will be socially white in the twenty-first century. Of course there are problems with the term "white": many of the new immigrants, while demanding the rights traditionally reserved for whites, do not want the term applied to

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<sup>1</sup> We are not suggesting that it is the result of a ruling-class conspiracy. The recomposition is happening for a number of reasons, having to do with labor needs and global geopolitical considerations.

them; they are "Latin" or "Asian," and proud of it.<sup>2</sup> So the language of racial oppression needs to be modified in order to preserve its content. Confusion on this point leads some to describe our project as abolishing the *concept* of whiteness. Perhaps they think they are helping us by "clarifying" what we mean, but their description is wrong: we want to abolish the *white race*, whatever name it goes under. For similar reasons, we are not interested in the "deconstruction" of whiteness; outside of the academy, the opposite of "construct" is not "deconstruct" but *destroy*.

The situation is still in flux, and it is not yet clear which groups will be admitted to the privileges of the favored race and which will be excluded; the greatest actual beneficiaries of the new ethnic upsurge may be those who have traditionally enjoyed the privileges of whiteness. Italian-Americans are a protected group for purposes of affirmative action at the City University of New York, and we have had exchanges with Irish-Americans who reject the "white" label while claiming that Irish are under-represented in universities and calling for minimum Irish admissions quotas. They seek to change the name to play the game. (How will they determine who is Irish? Will they count Shaquille O'Neal?) As Jimmy Durante used to say, "Everybody wants to get into the act."

Part of the outcome depends on the attitude adopted by members of each group: if they do not learn to *act* as whites, they

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<sup>2</sup> We have said nothing about the "red" indigenous people of America. They are, of course, not immigrants. They also, along with people from Africa, served as the first point of reference against which the "white race" was defined; but their situation, too, is changing. Our aim is not to demonstrate our expertise on the system of racial oppression, but to overturn it.

will not be treated as whites.<sup>3</sup> And no one should forget that the process is reversible: if Tom Metzger or someone like him came to power, it is likely that the new immigrants would find themselves the victims of classical American racial oppression, or worse.

Nothing we have said should suggest that the new immigrants are all "middle class" (whatever that means). There are plenty of Chinese proletarians in garment factories. We cannot make the point too often: race privilege is for those who have nothing else; its function is not to exempt people from exploitation but to reconcile them to it.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, during the height of anti-Chinese hysteria, one of the finest of all revolutionary organizations in U.S. history, the Industrial Workers of the World, stood at the dock in San Francisco greeting incoming Chinese workers with a huge banner. The banner read, in English and Chinese, "Chinese workers, welcome. Join the One Big Union of the Working Class." We stand in that tradition, and call upon all proletarians who pass through these doors to reject the poison bait of race privilege held out by the master class that despises them. As they say in Harlan County, there are no neutrals there: you'll either be a union man or a thug for J.H. Blair.

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<sup>3</sup> The large number of Salvadoreans who took part in the Los Angeles Rebellion of 1992 were not acting as whites. Neither were the large number of European Americans.

# LATINOS: THE INDIAN ESCAPE HATCH

BY WILLIAM JAVIER NELSON

Although discussion of "racial" classifications among Latinos in the U.S. would seem to be out of the realm of the overall theme of whiteness, the concepts found in the sociology of social change provide another vantage point. Social change sociologists often point to conflict between two rival parties and show how that conflict can affect a third, seemingly unrelated one. Thus, the conflict between the United States and Mexico over territory in the Southwest resulted in large scale European settlement in that region -- with significant consequences for the Native Americans already there.

The conflict between persons in the U.S. labeled as "black" and "white" has been well documented. It is my contention that the conflict between these two groups also affects a third group (Latinos) in the United States.

Whites have attempted to maintain an acceptable physical type by controlling the entry into their ranks of various people of color, such as Asians, but their overriding desire for exclusion has focused on the avoidance of sub-Saharan African ("black") ancestry. Marvin Harris and Conrad Kottak have described the "hypodescent" rule, which has historically been applied to the offspring of Europeans and Africans in this country.<sup>1</sup> Under the hypodescent rule, any offspring between a parent of a higher caste

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("white") and a parent of a lower caste ("black") is relegated to the social status of the lower caste parent. Thus an "interracial" marriage of a black and a white automatically produces a black.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in most of the U.S., anyone suspected of having any African ancestry is liable to be labeled as black. Among other things, this practice has had the purpose of eliminating African ancestry from the white population.<sup>3</sup>

One rarely hears North American whites claiming African ancestry. However, many of them have admitted having American Indian ancestry without jeopardizing their membership in the "white race." North Americans of note claiming Indian ancestry while self-identifying (*and being classified by U.S. society*) as white include Will Rogers, Cher, Dan Rather and James Garner. This reticence on the part of whites (who control most cultural, economic and political resources in this country) to embrace African ancestry is not lost on Latinos. The dynamics of discord and rejection which have been on-going between U.S. whites and blacks have put Latinos in a position where their African ancestry must be dealt with -- and African ancestry has always been a part of the fabric of Latin American life.

Esteva-Fabregat's excellent book on the race-mixing process, which began in Ibero-America over five hundred years ago, was careful to include Africans, as well as Indians and Spaniards.<sup>4</sup> Nor are Esteva-Fabregat's impressions in any way novel. A variety of historians, sociologists and anthropologists, ranging from Pierre van den Berghe to Magnus Mörner to Carl Degler to Charles Wagley have in the past chronicled the process of Latin American race mixing and the African contribution to it.<sup>5</sup> The heaviest concentration of African ancestry in Latin America has historically been in the coastal areas of South American and the Caribbean. Countries like Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, as well as the territory of Puerto Rico, have not only

histories of African presence but visible vestiges of African presence in the physical appearance of many of the people.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, African presence was not limited to the aforementioned areas. Mexico also had a sizable African input. According to Aguirre Beltran, in 1810 there were almost as many Afro-mestizos as Indo-mestizos.<sup>7</sup> In "white" Argentina, Leslie Rout has detailed the large percentages of persons of African origin (who were later absorbed into the population of Indians, creoles and later European immigrants).<sup>8</sup> Clearly then, African ancestry exists among Latinos. It has, however, been minimized in mass U.S. culture. When one moves away from specialists like Aguirre Beltran and Esteva-Fabregat and into the realm of "popular scholarship" geared for mass consumption by a U.S. audience, African ancestry seems to fade from importance and the Indian genetic contribution (which is more acceptable to North Americans) is emphasized. According to Richard Schaefer, writing in a college survey text on race relations, "The Chicano people trace their ancestry back to the merging of Spanish settlers with the Native Americans of Central America."<sup>9</sup>

The popular mass-oriented magazine *Hispanic* is careful to emphasize the Indian and Spanish antecedents of Latinos. When an occasional person appears who deviates from this ideal, the editors of *Hispanic* are quick to disclaim that the person is a "black Hispanic" (implying that other Hispanics have few, if any, African origins).

Ironically, Latinos provide one example in which the hypodescent rule *does not* operate in the U.S. Many Latinos, particularly from localities like the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Panama, Colombia and Venezuela *have* African ancestry but (because of the overall brown-skinned nature of the population of Latinos in general) this African ancestry does not necessarily make someone significantly deviate physically from

another person who may be a brown-skinned descendant of Indians and Spaniards. Moreover, since the holders of this African ancestry are not appreciably cordoned off into a separate world, as are North American blacks, they are liable to *act* and *feel* like other Latinos.<sup>10</sup>

Esteva-Fabregat's description of race-mixing in Latin America chronicled a process whereby African ancestry became interwoven in a complex matrix.<sup>11</sup> Aguirre Beltran's analysis of African ancestry in Mexico is noteworthy not so much because of the extent of African ancestry depicted but the way in which that ancestry became woven (along with the Indian and the Spanish) into the fabric of the Mexican population.<sup>12</sup> An anonymous painting of colonial Mexico gives 16 different racial possibilities resulting from Indian, African and Spanish mixture. The majority of the 16 cells contained persons with African ancestry.<sup>13</sup> It is important to note at this point that the hair texture of a person with 33% African ancestry may be the same as a person with no African ancestry at all. One of my English-as-a-Second-Language students once told me that his grandmother was very dark with kinky hair -- the student himself, a man with heavy, wavy hair, was indistinguishable from his fellow Mexican classmates (and, significantly, he was not rejected outright because of that ancestry).

When a man from the Dominican Republic (for whom African ancestry has possible cultural significance but little political significance) enters the U.S., a decision must be made concerning his African ancestry. If his hair is straight, he has an excellent chance at passing off his dark complexion as that of "Indian" (even though the Spaniards destroyed most of the Indian population seventy-five years after the Discovery). If his hair is kinky, his African ancestry, more apparent, will become a significant part of his life in this country. In both cases, the Latino is forced to "pick a side." Not surprisingly, given the white track record on African



ancestry, many Latinos ignobly negate a significant portion of their heritage.<sup>14</sup> At present (possibly because I *am* Latino), I tend to place the blame for this not on the Latino who is trying to cope with life in a new culture but on the white-dominated U.S. society which is bent on cordoning off blacks into their own, private world.

In many Latin American countries, African ancestry is far more interwoven (both culturally and genetically) in the fabric of everyday life. In the U.S., on the other hand, "black" and "white" terms are meant (as the names suggest) to be *absolute*, connoting total placement in one (but never both at the same time) of two conflict groups. I have not run across many mulatto North Americans confiding in me, "I'm really half white." Nor have I encountered many North Americans labeled as white who have confessed to having African ancestry, although R.P. Stuckert has estimated that a sizable percentage of them do have it.<sup>15</sup> In the U.S., African ancestry is not treated simply as an indication of a point of origin - - rather, it is something that converts the holder (of whatever percentage of African ancestry) into a person who is 100% black, and therefore 100% in a "genetically-defined" out-group. Latinos with African ancestry, highly cognizant of this dictum, will be so treated -- unless they can use the Indian escape hatch.<sup>16</sup>

## NOTES

1. Marvin Harris, *Patterns of Race in the Americas* (New York: Walker, 1964). See also Conrad Kottak, *Anthropology: the Exploration of Human Diversity* (New York: Random House, 1978), 50-60.
2. Ibid. See also William Javier Nelson, *Racial Definition Handbook* (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Company, 1982), 32-35. Also Nelson, "Racial Definition: Back-ground for Divergence," *Phylon* 47, no. 4 (December, 1986): 318-326.
3. Nelson, *Racial Definition Handbook*, 32-35.

4. Claudio Esteva-Fabregat, *Mestizaje in Ibero-America*, translated by John Wheat (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995). See the earlier chapters with descriptions of the formation of mestizo (Indian/Spanish) sexual unions, mulatto (African/Spanish) unions and zambo (African/Indian) unions. According to Esteva-Fabregat, it was the absence of Spanish women (as opposed to a lower degree of inherent racism), which spurred the massive amounts of mixing in Ibero-America when compared with Anglo-America.
5. Magnus Morner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America* (Boston: Little Brown, 1967). Carl Degler, *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (New York: MacMillan, 1971). Pierre van den Berghe, *Race and Racism: a Comparative Perspective* (New York: Wiley, 1967). Charles Wagley, *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* (Paris: UNESCO, 1952).
6. Esteva-Fabregat, *Mestizaje*.
7. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran, *La Poblacion Negra de Mexico, 1519-1810* (Mexico D.F.: Ediciones Fuente Cultural, 1946), 237.
8. Leslie B. Rout, Jr. *The African Experience in Spanish America, 1502 to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
9. Richard T. Schaefer, *Racial and Ethnic Groups*, 5th edition (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 274. Even some excellent monographs fall prey to limiting their scope of Mexican ethnicity to Indian -- even when they are talking about the poor and the powerless. See John A. Britton, *Revolution and Ideology: Images of the Mexican Revolution in the United States* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1995).
10. Because of the color gradient, Latinos are less likely to experience the kinds of different realities based upon membership in the white or black groups, as is common in the U.S. See William Megenney, "The Black Puerto Rican: an Analysis of Racial Attitude," *Phylon* 35, no. 1 (January 1974): 83-93. Because of exposure to the North American black/white dichotomy, many Puerto Ricans are succumbing to the practice of racial dichotomizing into "black" and "non-black" groups *on the island* before even getting to the U.S. mainland. See Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, *Puerto Rican Americans*, 2nd edition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-

Hall, 1987), 100, 105-106. I have purchased a recent packet of computer software describing Puerto Rico in which the population is divided into "black" (20%) and "white" (80%) groups.

11. Esteva-Fabregat, *Mestizaje*. In reading Esteva-Fabregat, one comes to see that part of the reason for this is the greater complexity and variations of encounters between and among groups, as compared to Anglo-America.

12. Aguirre Beltran, *La Poblacion Negra*. See also van den Berghe, *Race and Racism*, chapter on Mexico.

13. The painting depicts persons from various "racial" groups cohabiting with each other and the resulting offspring. The following "racial" designations are given, where African ancestry is present: Mulatto, Morisco, Chino, Salta Atras, Lobo, Gibaro, Albarozado, Canbujo, Sanbaigo, Calpamulato, Tente en el Aire, Noteentiendo, Torna Atras. I did computations of percentages of African, Spanish and Indian ancestry of all 16 categories and, for some of the categories, the percentages needed nine or ten decimal places. This painting only depicts 16 categories -- a much higher number of combinations is possible.

14. During 22 years of interviewing experience with Latinos in the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area, the only ones who have admitted African ancestry to me have been those with kinky hair -- and one light-skinned/straight-haired gentleman: Ramon "Chino" Casiano, who is a well-known percussionist. On the other hand, I have heard many references to Indian ancestry among Latinos in this area. Local Spanish teachers are highly prone to highlight this Indian background in their classes. I am a member of a local language teacher collaborative which meets monthly during the school year, and have been for a number of years. When I told a local Spanish teacher of the information on the African presence in Mexico compiled by Aguirre Beltran, she vehemently denied any such presence in Mexico.

15. R.P. Stuckert, "African Ancestry in the White Population," *Ohio Journal of Science* 58 (1958): 155-160.

## 50 RACE TRAITOR

16. Many Latinos are not even satisfied with being of partial Indian origin, since even Indians are non-white: they want pure whiteness, much like North Americans. See Roberto Rodriguez, "Latinos Explore and Grapple with Black Identity," *Black Issues in Higher Education* 7, no. 26 (February 23, 1995): 22-24.

# ILLEGAL ALIEN: A HOMECOMING ADDRESS

BY LILIAN FRIEDBERG

I am an illegal alien. My name is Peace. I have been in this country for nearly 30,000 years, the past 500 of which I have spent in exile. Upon my recent return to the land of my most ancient birth, I stood at the checkout counter in the whole foods coop around the corner from my new apartment in BlackCloud, Minnesota. The lady at the till posed what she thought was a perfectly innocent question. "Are you a member?" she asked routinely.

"Member?" I queried in response. "Why, no, I'm no member at all. In fact, I've been dis-membered. Severely. It is the pre-existing condition barring me from insurance plans -- the clubs and the coops, the societies of poets, dead and alive. I'm afraid I've been severed from the human race. Someone has cut out my heart, my tongue, and put it up for sale. It's back there, in the deep freeze. Look, that politically correct, morally upright, well-fed, well-bred, pretty little red head with five-hundred-sixty-seven-dollars worth of one-hundred-percent-organically-grown-preservative-free-pre-packaged-vegetarian-pot-pies stuffed in her shopping cart just bought a piece of my heart. She'll pop one in the space-saving-energy-efficient-environmentally-sound-microwave-oven tonight: tickticktick. Bing! She'll whisk it to the surface of the solid-oak-butcher-block-table she bought at Country Collections down the street for a mere three-hundred-and-some-odd-dollars, and you can bet your bottom dollar on it, she's PROUD to be a member."

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"Oh, I see." The salesclerk, whom I assumed to be a dues-paying member and law-abiding pawn in the game, tried to pretend I'd answered the question according to plan: with a simple yes or no. X or 0. (No, you may not put a slash through the zero.) I could almost hear her mind shifting gears, scanning the horizon of memory for a clue as to what to do to turn the now nearly awkward scene on the track of polite conversation and politically correct social convention. She sifted through the layers of data stored in the mental manuals instructing her in the proper procedure for debugging such flaws in the system as were evident in the personage of the hotheaded little revolutionary upsetting the Have-A-Nice-Day-good-ol'-grand-ol'-grand-ol'-American Way where it's I for me and me for me and none for all. Even if you are standing in line at the member-OWNED and OPERATED model of cooperative shopping that was the Fall of America.

The lady at the checkout was clever. "Well, you know," she said, in an effort to keep the peace, "you can become a member for only twenty dollars a year."

"Is that all it takes?" I asked, savoring just briefly the sadistic sense of satisfaction I sometimes gleaned from the catechismic ping-pong that was my search for answers to unposed questions and questions to insufficient answers. In so doing, I knew: I was putting my life on the line. I was taking risks, big ones. But it was better than being on the leash. So, I took the risk of unleashing the questions, the answers, and finally, I found my self in jeopardy. Double jeopardy, no less. And there it was, then, the final question in the tournament of champions.

Of course, I had no problem scratching out the correct question which was, "Are you a member?" The answer had been, "No." Still, I had lost the match because, even though I got the question, my bet was off. More than anything, I suppose, it had been my logic that failed me: I figured if I -- any I, just as long as

there was one -- one single solitary I, one stone, one shell of a human, a heart -- finally retracted the "yes" that had served as a given for so many light years, the rest of the race would follow suit and Peace would be trump. I was enough of a believer to have hoped. I thought if I dropped out of the race that was not human, if I seceded from a union that was none, if I broke the rules and popped the wrong questions, the race would have been won: no one would cross the finish line and we would go on forever. But, because most of the humans running the race thought the point was to get ahead of the rest of the pack in order to cross the finish line first, my logic proved faulty. I knew, though, that the point remained one of reaching the finish line together and, without crossing it, going back to the start to begin again and again.

I could not bring my heart to join the rest of the race in its ruthless pursuit of the finish line, so I dropped out instead. The only other option would have been to win the race, but not the prize, which was Peace. This, then, is how I came to be an illegal alien in my own home.

I was convinced that others would follow. I never hoped to be alone out here. Never, in my wildest dreams, could I have imagined that, in voicing my final veto, I'd have risked becoming an illegal alien.

But that's what happened. Here I am, there you are. I visit your airports and taxi stands -- the places where arrivals and departures come. I stand in line, pay my dues and try not to appear conspicuous. But there is a blazing red "A" imprinted on my chest, burning a hole where my heart used to be. I am marked for life by the tragedy. "A" for Alien. "A" for American. "A" for the insignia on my worn t-shirt that says, "I am Ashamed to be an American," because I simply cannot stomach the thought of sitting down to dinner at a table in the smoke-free shelter of a vegetarian restaurant whose claim to fame is that it is the "bioenergetic center of the

universe" and yet is situated at the epicenter of the ground-breaking, earth-shaking society in which one in three women will be raped in her lifetime, in which a murder-free day in Detroit is a socio-economic impossibility and where egregiously bad actors are given the reigns in the serial re-run of *How the West was Won* while the good guys and gals saunter through the revolving doors of their smoke-free environments, sedated, sipping the sweet sap of their sleepy time teas, oblivious to the fact that we've got far more serious problems on our hands than second-hand smoke.

You see, I've been to the center of the universe. It is my home planet. And it is NOT, I assure you, a smoke-free environment. It's only logical, you know: where there's smoke, there's fire; therefore, where there's fire, there has got to be smoke. And, because I have been there, I KNOW there is fire at the center of the universe. A smoke-free municipal airport is not going to get us there, folks, until the single black mother in South Saint Paul can afford the vegetarian pot pies served up at the bioenergetic center of the universe. Unless we start posing the questions that will breed solutions to the murder-free days that do not occur in Detroit, Chicago and East LA, the monolith we, as Americans, erect for posterity will be a neon sign that reads, "Carcinogenic Center of a Smoke-Free Environment."

"Eat your heart out, America!" But, remember that what you are eating are the second-hand hearts, the hand-me-down hearts, the busted, broken, bleating and barely beating hearts of a people who once harbored the bioenergetic center of the universe in the very cavity where what remains now is a glittering red "A": written in memorium of a race that re-membered, not one that grouped and re-grouped in a constant effort to divide and separate the race into those who are members and those who are not.

"Illegal alien, go home!" they tell me, "Leave, if you don't like it. This is a free country!" So, I do. I leave. And I walk down



the street to the next establishment. There, where the hungry minds are fed and the tables of contents are written, the waiters and waitresses bear t-shirts that say "Every Legal Herb."

I re-mind them, "This is a contradiction in terms."

They are puzzled and ask, "How so?"

"I'm afraid in taking tobacco from the menu, you have taken what was once considered to be the source of truth. In the olden days, you know? When there was fire in the hearts and food in the bellies and the smoke curled up from Earth lodges in a smut-free, smog-free environment."

"Oh, I see." There is embarrassment and confusion in the waiter's gait as he turns from my table, hoping I don't stay very long.

And I won't. Because I am a heavy smoker who cannot thrive in a smoke-free environment. Because I am an illegal alien in a place where every legal herb is plucked and plunked down on a table void of content and Truth. I choke on my smoke, swallow my Truth with a huff and a puff and leave. There is blood on my hands, red as the red of my heart, my hearth, my home.

Imagine, America, if my answer were "yes," what would the question have to be?

# Telling Times

BY LILIAN FRIEDBERG

It is the autumn equinox --  
the time when eggs stand still  
and straight.\*

Downstairs,  
the neighbors are fighting --  
I can hear them shout,  
"Then just go, goddammit,  
get out!"

I am quiet,  
my silent heart broken  
by the tick, tick, tock  
of my westclox watch.

I've forgotten  
how  
to tell  
time  
without it.

I know, then,  
it is time --  
to re-Member.

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\* At the time of the vernal equinox, an egg will stand straight on its point.

# RAY SPRIGLE, PIONEER

BY RICHARD REES

When John Howard Griffin took his famous journey in 1959 as a temporary Black man, recorded in *Black Like Me*, he did not seem to be aware, nor is it widely acknowledged, that another white Northerner had already blazed the trail. Others to make the trip since have been Grace Halsell in 1969 and Joshua Solomon, a University of Maryland student, in 1994. But it seems that the first white to pass as Black for journalistic purposes was Ray Sprigle, a 61-year-old writer for the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette*, in 1947.

In 1938, Sprigle made a name for himself by winning a Pulitzer for a series he wrote exposing Supreme Court Justice Hugo L. Black's membership in the Ku Klux Klan. Nine years later, he once again took up the issue of white racism with an idea from the popular novel and film, "Gentleman's Agreement," in which a reporter poses as a Jew in order to uncover the subtle dynamics of anti-Semitism. In this case, however, the ruse was adapted to discover first-hand the forces of racism experienced by the "Negro" in the South. The results were published first as a twenty-one part series in the *Gazette* and thirteen other newspapers and then as a pamphlet sensationally titled "I Was a Negro in the South for 30 Days." After receiving a Headline Club Award and several offers from publishers, a version of the series was published as *In the Land of Jim Crow* (1949). The serial boosted circulation for the *Gazette* and was widely read on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line. It even prompted a counter-series in defense of the South. Today such an experiment in "blackening up" may seem suspicious as yet another

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white appropriation of Black experience. But Ray Sprigle deserves credit for aiding in the post-World War-Two struggle against segregation because his daring stunt helped bring greater awareness to an issue that would soon become the focus of national attention.

Sprigle's disguise raises some interesting questions about the nature of racial ideology in America. Unlike Griffin, neither he nor the chemists he consulted could find a suitable means of turning his skin dark. Experiments with various dyes and chemicals, like walnut juice and iodine, proved failures and Sprigle's only option was to shave his head and get a Florida suntan. Even though his skin remained relatively light, he learned that "much of [his] concern over acquiring a dark skin was wasted worry and effort" because he "encountered scores of Negroes as white as I ever had been back in Pittsburgh" (*Crow* 22). The ease with which Sprigle was able to "pass" prompted him to reflect on the artificiality of America's racial categories. "I was to learn that the color line that separates the races is an extremely dim and tenuous one. Thousands of Negroes cross that line, back and forth, at will" (*Crow* 22). Sprigle's considerations on the practice of passing, in both directions, lead him to realize that the perceived differences between skin colors, upon which racism depends, are a product of social interaction rather than nature. As a result, the divisions along the spectrum must be constantly policed -- as his story of a white conductor suggests. Upon mistaking a light-skinned African-American for "white," the conductor insisted the man "git on up in the white coaches," advising him that it was against the law for him to "ride with these niggers" (*Crow* 5). Sprigle took this anecdote to demonstrate why the imaginary line must be so scrupulously monitored and reasserted:

Probably the conductor hadn't reasoned the thing out thoroughly, but undoubtedly he realized that,

come the day when neither he nor any other white could be certain of distinguishing great numbers of the Negroes from their white cousins, Old Jim Crow was in for a terrible lacing. (*Crow* 5)

Yet despite the caprice with which the line is drawn between black skin and white, Sprigle came to realize the stark reality of the difference between the two worlds. What Sprigle discovered was that stepping across the color line was like stepping through the looking glass. "Now I was black and the world I was to know was as bewildering as if I had been dropped down on the moon" (*Negro* 1). Walter White, then executive director of the NAACP, guided Sprigle and provided him access to the strange and twisted world of Jim Crow. Unlike Norman Mailer's cavalier and exploitative version of the "Black Experience" ten years later in "The White Negro," Sprigle's account was a serious attempt to document the real material conditions of South Black life.

Many of the people that Sprigle encountered along the way bore witness to the way Black life in the South revolved around sharecropping. Sprigle documented the exploitative conditions that made farming for most little more than slavery in a new form of "grand larceny on a grand scale" (*Negro* 14). The men who worked the land were given half the value of what they produced minus what they owed for "furnish." The Black sharecroppers he met reported to have earned 30 to 200 dollars annually in the final account. Sprigle also described the impoverished living conditions of most sharecroppers and their families. But Sprigle also discovered a few men who had become prosperous farmers through luck and perseverance. Sprigle also seems to have enjoyed a good meal and occasionally treated the reader to long passages describing the spreads of Southern cooking his hosts provided.

Sprigle let us see how different were white and black worlds when it came to education and medical services. He reserved his most bitter acrimony for the reality of "separate but equal" on those two issues. Comparing a dilapidated Negro schoolhouse, a "leaking old wreck of a shanty," with its neat brick counterpoint for whites in the same county, Sprigle wrote, "So far as the education of little Black American citizens is concerned, that 'equal' in the South's pet catch phrase is a brazen, cynical lie and every white man knows it" (*Negro* 23). Similar circumstances prevailed in medical services. Many hospitals were white-only and many white doctors refused to treat other than white patients. So Sprigle related several tragic stories in which Blacks were refused emergency medical treatment and died en route to the special "Negro hospitals." One gets a sense of how his disguise might have allowed him and his white readers to empathize a little with their Black fellow citizens when Sprigle realizes the jeopardy his project has put him in: "I could see myself riding around in a Jim Crow ambulance, hunting a Jim Crow hospital while I slowly bled to death" (*Negro* 28).

Through Sprigle's eyes, white Northerners were exposed, many perhaps for the first time, to the degrading and frequently life-threatening rules of Jim Crow. But we also see how the most routine activity that whites could take for granted, like buying a pair of shoes, dealing with a telephone operator, or swimming in the ocean, could become an almost overwhelming nuisance for a person of color. Sprigle told his readers that at the store, Black Southern women were not allowed to touch, much less try on, a dress before buying it. To try on a hat, a cloth had to be pinned between a Black woman's head and the hat. Sprigle described the reprimanding a person was likely to receive for asking an operator to use "Mr." or "Mrs." to address a party the operator thought was Black. In states like South Carolina and Florida, there were special beaches set aside for Black people but in Georgia, "there's not a single foot

where a Negro can stick a toe in salt water" (*Negro* 30). Sprigle's readers may have been aware of the more blatant outrages of Jim Crow, but many of his white readers may have never considered how segregation was, and perhaps still is, inserted into the details of daily life.

The after-effects of World War Two are evident in Sprigle's account of Jim Crow. He repeatedly used "the master race" to refer to Southern white supremacists to encourage his readers to make the identification with Nazism and fascism. An anecdote about a Black maid who was instructed to take her mistress's poodle swimming at a beach which was off limits to Blacks reminded Sprigle of "the jokes about Hitler that used to be current in Germany and....-witticisms at the expense of Stalin, that came out of Russia" (*Negro* 30). There is also the bitter irony of the Black soldier who risked his life to defeat fascism and racism in Europe only to find apartheid waiting for him when he returned stateside. Sprigle recounted the story of PFC Maceo Yost Snipes from Georgia who returned only to be reminded in no uncertain terms that Blacks would not be allowed to vote. The warning that the first Negro to vote would be killed only strengthened his determination, so Snipes stunned the election board by showing up and filling out a ballot. But as Sprigle put it, it was a dead man that voted and "the white folks just let him walk around another week before they buried him" (*Crow* 94). He was called from his house and shot while his murderers were found innocent on the usual grounds of "justifiable homicide in self-defense."

Among the most interesting aspects of Sprigle's journal are the effects it had on his own racial identity. Sprigle's attempt to see America from the Black point of view permanently altered his sense of his own whiteness.

In weeks to come I was to become seriously concerned about the psychological change that was taking place in me. There were to be nights when I would sit for hours listening to grim tales of injustice and cruelty and the wanton shedding of blood, so that I began to be worried over the problem of turning my mind "white" again. To tell the truth, I doubt if I will ever regain the satisfied, superior white psychology that I took South with me. (*Crow* 15)

It is still useful to anti-racist "white" people today to consider Sprigle's brief but intense exposure to whiteness from a non-white perspective. His brush with what it might be like to be Black in a white supremacist society alienated him from his routine psychological identification with that group. "These whites already were a people entirely alien to me, a people set far apart from me and my world" (*Negro* 5). At least momentarily, his normal unreflected association with the white majority underwent a significant and positive change.

It is not surprising that the reactions to this race traitor were quick and numerous. Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* publisher William Block said that no series had ever received more attention (Brennan). While "about 70% were critical of his stand," only one threatened violence -- a man in Rhode Island promised Sprigle a horsewhipping. Sprigle claimed to be surprised by the degree of the negative reaction and his reply seems a little evasive and contradictory. "I didn't intend to be a crusader," he said in response, "I had no desire to champion the cause of the Negro. All I was interested in was to see that justice was done to a group that is grossly oppressed" (Brennan).

Sprigle might also have been surprised by the fact that most



of his detractors were from the North, given the way that he tended to minimize Northern racism when comparing it to the South. He did not deny that Black people were subject to discrimination but argued that, unlike the South, such instances were aberrant rather than inherent in the social structure. "In short, discrimination against the Negro in the North is usually in defiance of the law. In the South it is enforced and maintained by the law" (*Negro* 2).

We might attribute Sprigle's ignorance of structural racism to the limitations of a white liberal position. While able to protest the blatant abuses of legalized apartheid, Sprigle's perspective deserves criticism for its inability to detect the more subtle and often invisible mechanisms of institutional and cultural racism that continue to characterize American society on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line. Nor should Sprigle escape the sort of criticism that Eric Lott has brought to bear on John Howard Griffin. That is, we need to consider the degree to which his project perpetuated the legacy of American blackface. The experiment itself implied a disregard for a long tradition of African American writers who had spoken quite eloquently of their own conditions. The implicit need for white verification of Black experience offered the same insult and racist thinking that Sprigle attempted to expose. At its worst, Sprigle's cooptation of "the Black experience" to sell newspapers might be criticized as parallel to the way minstrel shows coopted the image of the African American to sell tickets.

Still, of course, there are differences between Sprigle's project and the tradition of blackface. The effect of his work was to expose himself and his readers to the conditions of Black Americans more than to exploit them. In fact, it might be argued that Sprigle represented a break in the tradition of black face. We might see Sprigle's contribution in terms of a moment of self-reflection in which whiteness attempted to examine itself, albeit in limited ways,

from the position of the Other. In any case, he is to be recognized for his initiative in discovering what white Americans are slow to learn: that the Black experience is fundamentally different from white because the assurances of justice and fairness, limited and tentative as they may be for most people in a capitalist society, have even less meaning in the life of African Americans. Given the limitations of the white liberal position, Sprigle's work shows a rare degree of empathy in white American letters. He used his byline to advocate voting rights and educational reform for African Americans, major planks in the civil rights platform. Though his concerns as an investigative reporter for liberal reform were not devoted exclusively to the fight against racism, and his blackface experience may have lost its strategic utility, anti-racists should remember Ray Sprigle for his courageous efforts to expose and discredit white supremacy.

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# REVIEWS

Carolyn L. Karcher, *The First Woman in the Republic: A Cultural Biography of Lydia Maria Child*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994. 607 pages, notes + index. \$37.95.

BY LOUISE M. NEWMAN

As Carolyn Karcher informs us on the first page of this monumental biography, Lydia Maria Child (1802-1880) was once a household name, known throughout the country for her children's stories, domestic advice books, abolitionist tracts, book reviews and articles. Her corpus amounted to 46 books and tracts, including 4 novels, 3 collections of short stories, and enough journalistic pieces to fill several anthologies (xiii). Although her reputation as a creative writer and anti-slavery activist seemed secure in the wake of the Civil War, the backlash against Reconstruction eroded everything she struggled to achieve. To the extent that Child has any public recognition today at all, it is usually for her editing of Harriet A. Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) rather than as an author in her own right.

This biography's greatest strengths (and greatest flaws) derive from Karcher's purposeful decision to quote extensively from Child's writings and to offer lengthy critical commentaries. The result is a dense and demanding narrative that extends over 600 pages and is organized around Child's literary output, rather than personal life events. Those readers who have the patience to work through this multi-dimensional, nuanced account will benefit immensely from Karcher's adept forays into nineteenth-century

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literature, politics and culture.

Two years before James Fenimore Cooper published *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), Child offered critical reflections on the relations between white settlers and Indians in her novel *Hobomok* (1824), and "unlike Cooper, she denied the inevitability of race war" (612). A decade before Ralph Waldo Emerson was identified as a Transcendentalist, Child gave voice to transcendental philosophy in her historical novels, while her *Letters from New York* (1843), Karcher opines, "exemplifie[d] Transcendentalist literary style at its most innovative" (xv). Thomas Wentworth Higginson praised Child's *Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833) as the "'ablest' and most comprehensive antislavery book 'ever printed in America'" (xi), while theologian Theodore Parker pronounced her *Progress of Religious Ideas* (1855) "the book of the age" (xi). Finally, a reviewer for the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* characterized her race novel *A Romance of the Republic* (1867) (in hyperbolic terms) as "one of the most thrilling books... involving the rights of the colored people [ever written] -- not excepting *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" (xi).

In assessing Child's racial views, Karcher insists on a dual perspective: Child was a radical who denied that whites were innately superior to other races and went beyond most other white progressives in suggesting racial amalgamation as a solution to the country's racial conflicts; however, Child's imaginings are marred by what Karcher calls "tragic contradictions" (526): a paternalistic belief that benevolent whites knew what was best for other races, and an ethnocentrism that upheld "Euro-American 'civilization'... as the model for other cultures to emulate" (555).

Lydia Francis was born in Medford, Massachusetts, the youngest of five surviving children. She attended local schools until she was twelve years old, but received the bulk of her instruction informally from her older brother Convers and from reading on her

own. When she was nine years old, Convers left home to attend Harvard University, her favorite sister, Susannah, married and moved to Charlestown, and her mother became bedridden with tuberculosis, dying three years later. These traumatic events had a significant impact on Child that lasted throughout her life. As Karcher puts it, "Child would spend a lifetime coping with the psychic wounds left by her mother's illness and death: unresolved anger toward [both] her parents.... guilt and chronic depression.... and an insatiable yearning for love" (5).

Lydia Francis sought to satisfy her cravings for love by marrying David Lee Child in 1828, a man whom Karcher depicts as self-centered, fiscally irresponsible and emotionally withdrawn. To help pay her husband's debts, Child stopped writing novels and devoted her time to more lucrative projects -- particularly domestic advice and annual gift books -- while continuing to earn her living by editing the *Juvenile Miscellany*, a very successful children's magazine she founded in 1826. Karcher is intensely critical of David's failings as a husband (he was neither an adequate financial provider nor a satisfying lover, it seems), and argues that Child unconsciously circumscribed her professional activities so as not to outshine her husband in all things and sacrificed her own interests to accomodate her husband's various business ventures. Karcher attributes Child's unproductive periods to the many physical and emotional dislocations she endured, arguing that Child's desire to act the part of the "good wife" led her, in the 1830s, to avoid "analysis of the wrongs women suffered under patriarchy, lest it unleash her repressed anger against David" (400).

In 1843, after 14 difficult years, Child decided out of "self-defense" to protect her earnings from David's creditors and to remain in New York ("let him experiment where he will" [293]). During this time she created new bonds with a "feminist sisterhood" (323), including Lucy Osgood, Marianne Devereux, and Margaret

Fuller, as well as close relationships with several men: her long-standing friend Ellis Loring, who served as her financial and intellectual advisor; John Hopper, a man 13 years her junior, who was her daily companion, and the Norwegian pianist, Ole Bull, who stirred her passion for music. In this period, she also came to identify strongly with "fallen women," perhaps, Karcher speculates, "as a result of [her own] struggle to contain sexual impulses which [she] felt to be illicit"(327).

Karcher frequently ventures psychological speculations of this type, often grounding them in controversial readings of Child's fictional writings. From *Hobomok*, for example, Karcher finds evidence of Child's conflict with her father as well as forebodings over her developing feelings for David. *Philothea: A Romance* (1836) registers Child's repressed awareness that "she was killing the most vibrant part of herself by....allowing an 'incurable' husband to direct the course of her life" (236). Early writings often serve as "prophesies" for the radical course that Child's later life would take, while stories written in the 1840s provide "vital clues" about Child's "remarkable psychosexual insights" into her relationship with her estranged husband(330). Despite Child's seeming ease in negotiating her many different roles -- novelist and literary darling of the Boston salons in the mid-1820s, loving wife and domestic advice expert of the late 1820s, political reformer and spokesperson for the anti-slavery movement of the 1830s, separated writer and woman's rights advocate in the 1840s, and so forth -- Karcher finds evidence in Child's fictional work that "the conflicts among her different selves were tearing her apart" (236). Karcher's interpretations thus make visible an unresolved struggle that cannot be documented by Child's existing correspondence. (In 1849, thinking she was close to death, Child burned over three hundred letters [xxiii]).

This analytical methodology is central to the book and provides the basis for Karcher's most interesting and provocative

musings. Readers who insist on literal interpretations of memoirs and letters as the only valid entree into personal life will undoubtedly find Karcher's approach unacceptable. But those who have a greater appreciation for the fluid boundaries between imagined and lived reality, and who are as skeptical of finding "truth" in letters as others are of finding it in "fictive" stories, will delight in the way that Karcher mines Child's writings for the unspoken anxieties and repressed emotions that constitute the context for Child's racial views, political commitments and literary creations.

By the mid-1850s, Child had reconsecrated her relationship to her husband, again turning their marriage into an antislavery partnership. After many separations and having experienced an independence that had tremendous emotional costs, Child ultimately "directed her residual anger over her aborted career away from David and toward the patriarchal system that subordinated all women to men" (399). In the late 1850s, approaching the age of 60, settled in Wayland, Massachusetts in the house she inherited upon her father's death, Child entered a period of steady work that culminated in some of her most influential works, *The Right Way the Safe Way* (1860), *Correspondence between Lydia Maria Child and Gov. Wise and Mrs. Mason of Virginia* (1860), *The Freedmen's Book* (1865), and a novel Child considered the capstone of her career, *A Romance of the Republic* (1867).

For readers of *Race Traitor*, the chapters that may prove of greatest interest are those that directly explore Child's involvement in the anti-slavery movement. Chapters 8 and 9 examine the couple's anti-slavery activities of the early 1830s and analyze how David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829) and exchanges with William Lloyd Garrison prompted Child to move from colonization to abolitionism. Chapter 12 treats the early 1840s when Child assumed the editorship of the American Anti-Slavery Society's *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, doubling

the *Standard's* subscription list from 2500 to 5000. Child not only made the paper a leading source of news about the slavery controversy, she also developed the literary department into a major attraction, contributing what became the newspaper's most popular item, a column called "Letters From New York," which blended pictorial description, social criticism and philosophical reflection in treatment of such issues as urban poverty, prison reform, women's rights, capital punishment and religious tolerance.

Chapters 17-19 explore Child's renewed involvement in the anti-slavery movement from 1859 to the end of the Civil War. 1859-1861 was a particularly important period for both Child and the movement, marked by John Brown's raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry and by Child's editing of Harriet A. Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). Impressed by John Brown's heroism, although considering him "sadly mistaken in his mode of operation" (418), Child wrote Brown a letter offering to nurse him while he was in prison, and sent another to Governor Henry Wise of Virginia who was Brown's official custodian. These letters, along with Wise's response and an exchange that ensued between Child and Margaretta Mason, wife of Virginia's Senator James Mason, catapulted Child once more into the forefront of political debate. The correspondence was reprinted in newspapers throughout the country and then reissued as a tract by the American Anti-Slavery Society, reaching the almost unprecedented circulation of 300,000 copies (423).

Nowhere are Karcher's extraordinary skills as both historian and literary critic more apparent than in her treatment of *A Romance of the Republic*, which she reads for its autobiographical resonances, its historical allusions, and its radical, but nonetheless racist, ideology. Karcher points out that while the work was "aimed at healing the national divisions caused by slavery, war and racial hatred," its "healing mission" was "personal as well as



political," bringing "into harmony the dissonant phases of [Child's] life... reconcil[ing] her conflicting loyalties to men who had fulfilled different needs in her ... and merg[ing] her disparate selves ..." (511).

The last two decades of Child's life were filled with the deaths of close friends and associates (Louisa Loring, 1868, Charles Sumner, 1874, her husband David, 1874, William Lloyd Garrison, 1879), but Child continued her political activism by publishing articles on black suffrage, land redistribution, women's rights, and Indian rights in journals that included the *Standard*, *Independent*, *Woman's Advocate*, and the *Woman's Journal*. In Karcher's assessment, Child's commitment to racial and sexual equality never wavered. Unlike other women's rights advocates of the 1870s, Child did not give in to the backlash against Reconstruction and supported the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, even though these amendments did not have provisions for enfranchising white women. She opposed postbellum schemes to annex the Dominican Republic and Cuba as vehemently as she had refuted antebellum justifications for seizing Florida and northern Mexico. On class issues, however, Child was not among her generation's most progressive thinkers. She remained rooted in an antebellum view of labor, clinging to her "'faith in Association' as the ultimate solution to the conflict between capital and labor, rich and poor" (567). Thus she opposed legislation designed to protect workers' rights and to regulate working conditions.

For Karcher, Lydia Maria Child's example poses a challenge to scholars' "persistent identification of women writers with sentimentalism," (609) and enables us to explore the tensions that existed in bourgeois women's rights ideology. In her struggle to reconcile her desire for a comfortable domesticity and an unconventional career, Child's life illuminates a struggle still relevant for millions of U.S. women today.

Despite its great strengths, this book may have trouble

finding an appreciative audience. My own concern is that white feminists, to whom this biography is so clearly addressed, will assume that, because we can critique the class and cultural ethno-centrism of Child's views, we have moved beyond the tradition that she so centrally embodies. But perhaps the greater worry is not that this biography will be misread but that it will not be read at all -- and the significance of Child's life pass unnoticed.

**Editors' note:** Part of *The First Woman in the Republic* first appeared in *Race Traitor*. The University of Massachusetts Press has reprinted *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans*, by Lydia Maria Child, edited by Carolyn L. Karcher. It is 207 pages long, and costs \$14.95 in paperback.

Barry Unsworth. *Sacred Hunger*. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992. 630 pp. \$11.95 paperback.

BY ADAM SABRA

Rarely does a novelist succeed in capturing the spirit of an entire historical age in one work. Rarer still is the novel whose account of our past forces us to face up to the character of our present society and demands that we take action to change it. Barry Unsworth's *Sacred Hunger* is such a novel.

The narrative begins in 1752 as the Liverpool merchant William Kemp commissions a slave ship. Kemp, a cotton merchant whose finances are dangerously overstretched, hopes to reap a huge profit from the risky but lucrative business of acquiring slaves in West Africa, selling them for sugar in Jamaica, and selling the sugar in England. Two members of Kemp's family play important roles

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in the novel. The first is his son Erasmus, a young man obsessed with his social standing, who finds his future mortgaged on the success of the ship; he is the personification of capital. The second is his nephew Matthew Paris, a man whose will to live has been broken by personal tragedy, who is to be the ship's doctor.

If the enslavement of millions of Africans and their exploitation in the colonies of the New World was one of the great dramas of the 18th century, the other was the growth of wage labor. Unsworth places the two side by side for inspection. Some weeks before the ship is to depart England, Paris suggests to Thurso, the captain, that he hire a crew well in advance to be sure of having the requisite number of men on hand when they sail. "Tell me, then," asks Thurso, "how do you suggest we could secure the men, if we took them on so far in advance?" Paris proposes giving them an advance payment. Thurso dismisses the idea, claiming that such "scum" could not be trusted to fulfill their part of the bargain.

Where workers cannot be "trusted" to keep to a contract, other means must be found to secure them. One fellow, just paid off a ship, runs up a large tab in an alehouse; his purse is stolen by a prostitute in league with the innkeeper. The innkeeper, who supplements his income by selling men to the merchant fleet, gives him a choice, either ship out or go to prison. A second, a navy deserter who will be hanged if caught, is handed over to the ship's recruiter by a friend's wife with a sick baby, in exchange for money to buy a grinder for making sausages to sell in the street. A third is a simpleton, lured by false promises.

As the ship approaches the coast of Africa, Paris expresses doubts about the morality of slavery. Thurso tells him,

...mark my words, sir, you will go with a whip in your hand and a pistol in your belt like every other man aboard. Depend on it, the keeper will very quickly decide which side

of the cage he is on.

Paris is not so sure. "You are admirably clear in your mind," he tells Thurso, "...as to who is caged and who is free." As Paris's remark suggests, both English and Africans are imprisoned aboard the ship.

Reaching the coast of Africa the ship starts to take on its cargo. The reader learns that, like the crew, slaves are conscripted by buying up people in debt. Some of the traders are themselves Africans, in the employ of the Royal Africa Company. They are driven by the same motivation, profit, that drives the English investors. For his part the captain treats them as fellow businessmen -- no nonsense of "race" here. Before the ship sails for the West Indies, it takes on a passenger named Delblanc, a disillusioned painter with Rousseauian-communist views, who as the novel unfolds will come to embody the revolutionary seeking to influence the course of events.

When the slaves come on board, the status of the sailors changes. Up to this point, they have had little to do with the conversion of free men and women into chattel. Thurso now distributes sidearms to them. Despite how they were recruited, he relies on them to keep order, depending on their status as "free" men to guarantee that they won't turn their weapons on him. Once armed, the sailors will be the first line of defense of their employer's human property, and therefore logical targets of any attempt at revolt by the slaves, whom they will learn to fear. Symbolically, the moment marks the induction of the sailors into the white race.

In the eighteenth century, the wage was not the universal, or even the dominant, mode of commanding labor, and sailors held a status between outright slavery and formal freedom. On one occasion two of them are flogged for an infraction of the rules. This happens in full view of the slaves, leading Paris to wonder "what the

negroes think when they see their captors being thus treated..." Later one of the sailors who had fled on the African coast is returned to the ship by African slavers who offer to sell him back to Captain Thurso. The captain agrees to pay the asking price (less than the price of a slave), but without conscious irony instructs the Africans that the runaway "is not a slave but an English seaman."

Perhaps the most potent statement of the common suffering comes towards the end of the journey. Food has begun to run out and the sailors are slowly dying of hunger and scurvy. The slaves are somewhat better provided for than the crew, since the captain stands to lose his employer's investment and his own share in the spoils if they die, whereas death among the crew would save on wages. The sailors are reduced to begging food from their captives. Paris records, "Crew and slaves are in the embrace of a wretchedness so profound that it precludes all animosity..." The captain then orders sick slaves thrown overboard in order to collect the insurance rather than risk total loss if they die. When Paris, who is, after all, a doctor, discovers this, he intervenes, in one of those unpremeditated acts that are a part of every uprising. His protest touches off a rebellion. The sailors kill the captain, seize the ship, release the slaves, and cargo and crew set off for the wilderness of Florida, where they establish a utopian community.

The term utopia ("no-place") is appropriate on two levels. For one thing, the scenario in the novel, while entirely plausible, never actually occurred. The eighteenth-century Atlantic seaboard was rife with rebellion, often uniting sailors and workers of many nations, complexions and creeds, but there is no account of the sailors of a slaver setting their cargo free.

Furthermore, the utopia established by the sailors and ex-slaves is located in the wilds of Florida, a "no-place" in the minds of mid-eighteenth-century Europeans. But it will not remain that way for long. The establishment of English sovereignty over Florida

brings the novel to its climax, providing Erasmus Kemp with the weapons he needs to pursue vengeance against his cousin Paris and the other inhabitants of the community.

In our own time, there is nowhere left to hide from the profit motive. Nonetheless, Unsworth's utopia is of interest to us on various counts. Aside from the threat of discovery, the new community faces a number of internal problems: relations between the sexes (men far outnumber women), differences in ability and energy among the individuals who make it up, absence of a common language and unifying mythology, suspicions left from shipboard distinctions between Europeans and Africans.

Some of these issues come to a head when a group of white and black slavers are spotted with their Indian captives not far from the community. The community must decide what to do. Some, hoping to escape detection, argue that they should let the slavers go. Others worry that a failure to interfere will risk discovery. A sailor asks, "Them white fellers done me no harm. Why should I raise my hand agin my own kind?" One of the African women then asks him whether, when he refers to his own kind, he means slave-takers?

At this point, Delblanc speaks up and demands that the slavers be killed. His logic is simple. They constitute a threat to the future of the whole community. He is prepared to kill in order to preserve their newly won freedom. But he has another motive as well. The new utopia lacks cohesion, it still suffers the scars of whiteness. He tells Paris,

We must kill them. Don't you see? It is providential -- they are mixed white and black, just as we are. By killing them we cancel the distinction. It is the only way... It is the only thing that will keep us together.

After the deed is done, they take the Indian captives back to the

settlement and ceremonially free them. The act wins the friendship of the surrounding Indians. Delblanc's intervention has saved the fledgling community and established its moral basis.

Marx wrote that capital comes into the world dripping blood from every pore. The world described in *Sacred Hunger*, while differing in some ways from our own, remains remarkably familiar. If chattel slavery is gone, or at least considerably reduced in scope, wage slavery is even more predominant than it was in the eighteenth century. And whiteness continues to hold millions in its sway, despite the utopian desires of some.

## BRIEFLY NOTED

Dorothy Sterling. *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Antislavery*. New York and London: Norton, 1991. 436 pages. \$14.95 paperback.

Here at *Race Traitor*, we take the abolitionists seriously. A small, isolated minority, dismissed as hopeless fanatics even by many who agreed with their goal of abolishing slavery, they played a crucial role in the history of the country. Part of the reason for their importance was their commitment to what might be called a strategy of creative provocation. They never won a majority to their point of view, but, as Wendell Phillips said, they "startled the South into madness," setting in motion a mighty chain of events.

Among the greatest of them was Abby Kelley, who, probably more than anyone else, was directly responsible for building the abolitionist organizations in the field. She was a tireless traveler and speaker, enduring numerous insults and physical hardships for the cause. She put off marriage and children for fear they would take her out of activity. And when she left her baby with her sister to go on the road again, she said nothing in her life ever hurt her as much as that, but she did it out of consideration

for those mothers whose babies were sold away from them.

She was so radical that sometimes she made even Garrison nervous. (Her husband, Stephen Foster, was even more radical than she. He regularly broke up church services, denouncing the minister and congregation as hypocrites and man-stealers.) Her radicalism was of the mind as well as the heart, and although she could weep for the slave, she had not an ounce of sentimentality toward former comrades who sought to water down abolitionist principles to make the movement respectable.

Those of us who identify ourselves as new abolitionists need more than anything else to know about our predecessors -- not merely the resolutions they passed at conventions (that information is easy to obtain) but the details of their day-to-day work: what their meetings were like, how they raised money, their relation to the vigilance committees and other ad hoc groups, members' responsibilities, how they divided tasks, how they sustained themselves through periods of disappointment, etc. This biography by Dorothy Sterling does more to open a window on these questions than any other generally available book I know of.

**Lowell Thompson. *"Whitefolks": Seeing America Through Black Eyes*. Partnership Against Racism: 1507 E. 53rd St., Unit 132, Chicago, IL 60615. 200 pages, \$50, hardcover.**

After twenty-five years in the advertising industry, Lowell Thompson quit his job and founded, together with a friend, a firm called Partnership Against Racism. By "whitefolks" he means the "man-made-covert-class-conscious-race-based-hierarchical-hypocritical-mentality" known as "the American way." He believes that "'white' folks and 'black' folks were created by greedy folks who became the rich and powerful folks who control America to this day."

Mr. Thompson takes aim at Thomas Jefferson, "the



founding father of our race problem," the film and print media, the advertising industry, *The Bell Curve*, and most politicians, past and present. He seeks to free the "Caucasian 200 million," who, he believes, have always been as enslaved as black people. "America's elites forced 'black' Americans into slavery and chained their bodies. But they talked 'white' Americans into enslaving themselves..." Mr. Thompson gives a lot of credit to Lerone Bennett, Jr., author of *The Shaping of Black America*, for helping him overcome the harmful effects of his public-school miseducation.

Mr. Thompson writes, "'Blackfolks' are 'white' America's mirror whether they realize it or not. And we can show them a view of themselves they've avoided from the day they landed on these shores." Americans are indeed fortunate to live in a country where there are people like Lowell Thompson willing and able to write and publish at their own expense a book of this nature. He says he will personally sell (or give away), sign, number, and register all 500 copies of this limited edition.

Clarence Page. *Showing My Color: Impolite Essays on Race and Identity*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996. 306 pages. \$23 hardcover.

Clarence Page is a nationally-syndicated columnist and a frequent voice on radio and TV talk shows. He is in many respects the ideal spokesman for those black professionals who operate in largely white areas of the economy and public life. In these essays he addresses the social separation of the races, the meaning of blackness, relations between the sexes, the Nation of Islam, Black-Jewish relations, entrepreneurs in the black community, intermarriage, and other issues. Mr. Page says he upholds the capitalist system, and has moved away from what he calls his youthful radicalism. But moderation means something different for him from what it would mean to a white politician. Insofar as he offers

direction for black people, his book is beyond the scope of this review. We are sure that many readers of this journal would find things in it to disagree with, but it is worth noting that Mr. Page, for all his efforts to locate himself somewhere in the world of practical politics, opposes racial oppression when he sees it. Thus he forcefully defends race-based affirmative action, in contrast to many whites who would like to call themselves radical. He also says nice things about *Race Traitor*; he, for one, is not put off by its "extreme" stand.

Mansfield B. Frazier. *From Behind the Wall: Commentary on Crime, Punishment, Race, and the Underclass by a Prison Inmate*. New York: Paragon, 1995. 252 pages. \$18.95 hardcover.

So long as there are prisons, there will be writers. Mr. Frazier is an Afro-American professional outlaw who spent a good deal of time behind bars for "stealing without a licence." He has put together a collection of very readable essays. Eschewing rhetoric and visionary schemes, he seeks practical solutions to a number of contemporary problems. Many of his observations are right on target, and his opinion is always worth thinking about. One of his pieces -- not included in this book -- was published in *Race Traitor*.

Theresa Perry, ed. *Teaching Malcolm X*. New York and London: Routledge, 1996. 246 pages, \$16.95 paperback.

In the first part of this book teachers tell of their experiences teaching Malcolm X to different groups of students; in the second part various writers comment on Malcolm's legacy. It is often forgotten that for Malcolm X, literacy was a means of obtaining freedom, not social mobility. The introduction places Malcolm's educational philosophy in the Afro-American tradition, and making

a powerful argument for its continuing relevance. A number of the pieces in this collection are noteworthy; in one, "The Perquisites of Whiteness," the writer, Robert Lowe, a European American, recounts being arrested at some demonstration. In jail awaiting arraignment and release he met a young black man in for confronting a cop who was beating a black woman. Lowe writes, "I knew I would be out of jail by morning, and would have legal counsel to exonerate me. He, on the other hand, would go to prison and do serious time. Although many whites have demonstrated against the Klan and neo-Nazis in typically ritualistic, face-to-face confrontations, I know of neither individual whites who have interceded with the police the way that young man did, nor of white groups who have followed the example..." It is as succinct a statement of what *Race Traitor* is about as any we have seen.

Stephen Steinberg, *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995. 276 pages. \$25 hardcover.

A history of social science writing on race relations over the past half-century, by the author of *The Ethnic Myth* (1981). The focus is on liberal orthodoxy, beginning with Gunnar Myrdal's classic, *An American Dilemma*, and going up to the recent backpedaling by liberals in the face of what the author calls the "scholarship of backlash."

N.I.

# LETTERS

## REMOVE MY NAME

I have just read No. 5 of *Race Traitor*. Preoccupation with work on Volume Two of *The Invention of the White Race* prevents me from doing more at this time than to raise a couple of questions.

1) Why spend so much time and effort on arguing with such an undeviating Hitlerite as Mr. Pendragon of the National Socialist White People's Party? In the end, all you had to show for it was getting on a first name basis, proving that you did not consider yourself to be one of those bad Jews from the genes, and making the point that you are not a Zionist, a "liberal" or a "pacifist." Having done so, why did you, after getting Mr. Pendragon's consent, publish the correspondence? Having decided to publish it, with his permission, why did you not at least insist that he distribute the correspondence in his circles in a number equal to the circulation of *Race Traitor*? Was it printed in imitation of Garrison's "Refuge of Oppression" column in the *Liberator*, in order to fire up the troops by reminding us of the heinousness of the National Socialists? Could you have not found another forum for setting forth your views on the subjects treated in your letters?

2) While I do not think the correspondence should have been published, I am in agreement with, or at least have no solid disagreement with, most of the arguments you put forward in your letters to Mr. Pendragon. Although you seem better acquainted with the Jewish history than I am, I don't see how you feel so certain that "Jewish distinctiveness" rests solely on the relation of Jews to the "commercial system" ["petty commerce" and "the liberal professions". (p. 42)] Two pages later you refer to Jews as an "ethnic group (like German or Italian) or else a religion (like Christian)." If, say, Slavic or Celtic or Germanic, or Latin people

cease to be peasants and become wage workers, do they lose their "distinctiveness" thereby?

I also want to comment briefly on the lead editorial in this issue, which observes that among "angry whites," are those who share with *Race Traitor* the fundamental principle that "nothing less than total change is worth fighting for." (p. 3)

Let's say, for purposes of argument, that the anti-government passion shown by the "militia" movement is the "immanent opposite" within it which, if developed according to the logic of the case as we would present it, would lead them to join their anger with ours in the struggle to overthrow white supremacy.

Given our limited time and resources, where should that effort be concentrated? The editorial seems to imply that it should be centered on the intersection of the two sets, presented by the "militia" movement in Michigan, and 1988 supporters of Jesse Jackson. That would seem to be the place to start. But how? Yes, tell them that we are not "liberals" or "pacifists" (as you attempted to assure Mr. Pendragon of in your letter of 22 January 1995).

But at best that is merely to get our foot in the door. What is to be the "selling point"? It must start with "Total Change" and "Rainbow Coalition", since those are the points of presumed agreement, and obviously an either-or gambit would be self-defeating, as history has repeatedly shown. It is just as true, though perhaps less obvious, that it cannot be both, *unless* we can persuade these "angry whites" that the non-total change represented by the Rainbow Coalition program has some positive relationship to the prospects for "total change." How can that be done and still convince these "angry whites" that we are not "liberals" and "pacifists"? Direct action, propaganda of the deed, though an appropriate and much-needed form of struggle, is no clear answer, since liberals and pacifists in the abolitionist struggle, the women's liberation movement, the civil rights and peace movements, have shown that

courage and audacity of that sort is no monopoly of "total-changers."

The differentiating principles, which have been consistently forwarded by *Race Traitor*, are rather the insistence on the strategic centrality of the struggle against white supremacy, the ending of the white-skin privilege system, and the dismantling of the white race, the Peculiar Institution. If the good that is immanent in the pro-Jackson "angry whites" is to serve to turn them into "angry anti-white-supremacists" it will be only through the teaching and practicing of these principles, whether by direct action, writing books, propaganda of word and of deed, mass struggle for partial demands, or otherwise.

If that is not enough to distinguish us from "the loyal opposition," we should stop worrying about it.

Ted Allen

Brooklyn, N.Y.

November 11, 1995

**Editors' Note:** The preceding letter was addressed to Noel Ignatiev. Noel replied, explaining the reasons for publishing the exchange and the editorial. On January 17, 1996, Ted wrote once more, stating, "Your... reference to the 'revolutionary oppositionism' of the Nazis and your apparent view that official exchanges with their leaders may help the fight against white supremacy did nothing to ease my 'discomfort'...", and asked to have his name removed from the list of contributing editors.

## INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE

I liked most of the last issue: Black Siouxi, drums against yuppies; a *Race Traitor* dream, a *Village Voice* nightmare! I didn't think much of the Interview with a Vampire (who calls Hitler hero

and dances on Rosa Luxemburg's grave). I didn't agree with the editorial on the militias, but it raised good questions. *Every* black commentator I've heard, from Ben Chavis to C. Eric Lincoln, has sounded the alarm on the polarized, guiltless whites. Is there such a thing as a "lost cause" white person? Is the "right" rank-and-file just cranky, alienated, laid-off machine operators who could go either way? Not according to Orrin Hatch and the Republicans fawning over Randy Weaver at last year's hearings, or the media that call him a "white separatist."

Phil Rubio

Durham, N.C.

February 10, 1996

## OBSCENE AND REVOLTING

The comments of Nazi Arthur Pendragon and Noel Ignatiev in *Race Traitor* Number 5, Winter '96 were revolting. Their exchange is one of the most anti-Jewish (anti-semitic) that I have seen in a publication that identifies with the left. I was very disturbed at Noel Ignatiev's arguments for: 1) their non-responsiveness to Pendragon's anti-semitic statements or when Noel did respond, the inadequacy of his comments, and 2) Noel's own anti-Jewish comments.

A recurring theme of Pendragon's is that a central aspect of being Jewish is a belief of being part of a "master race dominating a raceless herd of goyim" (p.21), or "Jewish hatred of all things white" (p.33). Rather than directly challenging this central aspect of Nazi philosophy, Noel responds primarily by stating that he is not Jewish, and that his opposition to white supremacy and support for abolishing the white race has nothing to do with his being of Jewish background. In other words, Noel's defense is not directed against Pendragon's attack on Jews but rather to the point that

Pendragon falsely attributes Noel's position to Noel being Jewish.

To Pendragon's proclamation that his main fight is against "Jew supremacy" (p.21), Noel responds that he welcomes challenges to the privileges of Jews or any other group. He then gives an example of an article in *RT* attacking the privileges of Jews in Israel (p.22). Pendragon is clearly talking about Jewish privilege and supremacy in the United States. Hence, Noel is either not confronting Pendragon's claim of Jewish privilege in the U.S. or is himself putting forward the concept of Jewish privilege in the U.S. Most Jews in the U.S. are part of the "white race" and thus have white skin privilege, but to write of a specific Jewish group privilege in this country is absurd and is a central aspect of an anti-semitic world view.

Noel does challenge strongly Pendragon's denial of the Nazi holocaust against Jews. However, after Pendragon admits that if it had happened it would be a crime against humanity, Noel responds by saying there is no point in arguing what happened and goes on to other points. It is obscene to argue whether the holocaust happened but it is also obscene to continue discussion with a Nazi who denies this genocide occurred.

Noel Ignatiev states, "I hate the propensity of American Jews to whine about the past sufferings of the Jews (which they mostly get wrong and did not experience personally)." (p.27) This is a very arrogant and insensitive statement. His use of the word "whine" is totally inappropriate. It trivializes the history of oppression of Jewish people. By writing that U.S. Jews did not experience this suffering personally, I assume Noel means this persecution took place in Europe. This is certainly where anti-semitism has been most deadly. However, he is oblivious to the direct family connections of Jews in the U.S. to this history and also implicitly denies any anti-semitism in the U.S.

Noel Ignatiev sees nothing positive in being Jewish or the



history of Jewish people. He says that the Jewish "spirit" to the extent it exists is flawed and a product of their role in petty commerce and its modern extension, the liberal professions. There is not one hint in Noel's 13 pages of comments on the positive role many Jews or people of Jewish background have played in the fight against white supremacy and for a revolutionary and humane socialism. In South Africa and the United States, Jews have been far more likely than other whites to struggle for liberation and support liberation struggles. In Europe, the situation has been similar. I am not arguing that most Jews are revolutionary or that Jewish tradition is primarily leftist. Rather it is not just coincidence that Rosa Luxemburg, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, Joe Slovo, Emma Goldman, Karl Marx, Leon Trotsky, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, William Kuntzler, Abbie Hoffman and many, many others were Jewish or of Jewish background, or for that matter, Noel Ignatiev.

There are other troubling aspects of Noel's comments not directly tied to the question of Jews. Briefly! Noel writes that he wants a world "where every man can fish in the morning, ...and play cello in the evening..." (p.28), or "No man was born to be a master or a slave" (p.29). Where are the women? On page 18, Noel states that "culturally all Americans are a combination of the Yankee, the Indian and the African...". Where are the people of Asian and Pacific Island background? Further, in responding to Pendragon's attack on multiculturalism, Noel is opportunistic when he writes, "I view multiculturalism as no solution to anything." (p.31) I probably disagree with Noel on multiculturalism but in any case Noel's criticisms of multiculturalism are different from those of the National Socialist White People's Party so why state this seeming agreement with them.

I hope that Noel Ignatiev and *Race Traitor* are willing to consider and accept some of these criticisms. They are not motivat-

ed by general disagreement with the politics of *Race Traitor* or Noel Ignatiev. I believe challenging white supremacy is central to any worthwhile radical politics in the United States. Moreover, the article and pamphlet by Noel, "Black Worker, White Worker" is probably the most insightful writing I have read demonstrating why challenging white supremacy is central to revolutionary change and the strategic implications of this position. That is why the exchange between Pendragon and someone who I have had a lot of respect for, Noel Ignatiev, is so distressing.

In closing, let me add a little of my own history. I am of Jewish background, which has certainly shaped who I am and what I believe in, although I am not a practicing Jew. My parents immigrated from Austria to the United States in 1939 and suffered under the Nazis but survived. Although not relevant to my criticisms, I have been consistently outspoken and active against Zionism, against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, have opposed all U.S. aid to Israel, and supported Palestinian self-determination for over twenty years.

Pete Bohmer

Olympia, Wash.

January 1996

## SORRY END

**Editors' Note:** The following letter was not sent to *Race Traitor*, but was taken off a discussion on the Internet.

One of these uncanny things is how the logic of "white skin privilege" thinking plays itself out. Since all white people who do not embrace the "race traitor" position of Ignatiev and his rather small band of like-thinking folks are, in effect, white supremacists, it follows that the militia are nothing very different than the rest of

white America, and nothing to be particularly feared. Hence, we should admire their willingness to fight the federal government (what is a small thing like blowing up a federal building with hundreds of people, including pre-school children, in this equation?), and join with them in para-military groups to fight the federal government. Classic fascist, racist and anti-semitic references to international banking conspiracies and a world government imposed by the United Nations which are expounded by the militias are embraced by Ignatiev and his magazine in this editorial. Organizations on the front line of the battle against the Klan, neo-Nazis and white supremacist groups, such as the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Oregon "Communities Against Hate" are denounced for their work. So the sorry, pitiful end of "white skin privilege" thinking lies in calls for unity with the most racist, most reactionary elements in America, and stands in opposition to those who -- at some risk to their own safety -- have made anti-racist and anti-fascist work their life's vocation.

Name Withheld

## ARMED STRUGGLE

"Aux armes!" (editorial, *RT5*) quotes a flyer criticizing the militia movement: "The key to protecting the rights and civil liberties of all Americans does not lie in forming armed paramilitary groups who want to take the law into their own hands." On the contrary, the editors rejoin: "We can think of no better way."

On the next page, however, discussing affirmative action, the editors approvingly quote Lydia Maria Child: "Great political changes may be forced by the pressure of external circumstances, without a corresponding change in the moral sentiment of the nation; but in all such cases, the change is worse than useless; the evil reappears, and usually in a more exaggerated form."

Now if Child is right (as I believe she is) then we can have no warrant for forming armed paramilitary groups and taking the law into our own hands until "the moral sentiment of the nation" is overwhelmingly, or at least preponderantly, opposed to what the editors rightly call "the massive, faceless, soul-destroying system that is sucking the life out of ordinary people in this country and around the world." Do the editors really believe that this is already the case?

Those of us who think that it will be the work of generations to radically alter "the moral sentiment of the nation" can't help feeling that loose talk about "taking the law into our own hands" can only be (to quote Child again) "worse than useless."

George Scialabba

Cambridge, Mass.

November 13, 1995

## CONTRADICTION

In issue 5, is there a contradiction between the first editorial and the second? The first salvages the militia groups because they are taking up arms and are anti-federalist. The second editorial upholds affirmative action. Wouldn't this be something in particular that militias would be fighting against, not so much on racist grounds (though I would argue that at least since George Wallace these things are inextricably linked), but moreover on anti-federalist grounds? In other words, is it possible under present conditions to be militantly anti-federalist but also support civil rights, which have historically, for better and worse, relied upon a strong federal government?

Rich Rees

Baltimore, Maryland

February 1996

## RIVETING

I just happily stumbled across a copy of *RT5* and, while I found the entire thing superb, meaning well-reasoned, provocative, and brave, I was particularly riveted by the exchange between Noel Ignatiev and Arthur Pendragon. Obviously I felt like Mr. Ignatiev was far better reasoned in his half of the exchange, but I found some of the intersections in philosophy, as well as the blunt statements of Mr. Pendragon, absolutely incredible. Dialogue like this is crucial to any progress, in my opinion. Too often, as I'm flipping through publications (mostly left, in my case), it's a "preaching to the chorus" phenomenon that seems destined for smallness. *Race Traitor* excites me incredibly, and I thank you for producing it.

I have just begun producing a 'zine, *LIP*, in the Chicago area, that will also be distributed in New York and Seattle. I ask your permission to reprint the exchange with complete information appended on how to get copies of *Race Traitor*.

Brian Brasel

Chicago

January 3, 1996

## POSSIBILITIES

The most promising aspect of the *Race Traitor* project is its potential to shake up the category of "race" and challenge "anti-racism" as a strategy. The most troubling question for me during this shake up has been, what does a race traitor do? Telling me to be like Old John Brown, much as I admire him, doesn't help. But the exchange between Noel and the national socialist in *RT5* did. Sail the uncharted waters, it suggested. Confront white supremacy at its core with one of its most ardent advocates. Treat him as a human

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being because his perspective and his potential to leave the white club is no different from any other member. It may be even greater because of his open hostility to the system that is home to white supremacy. An "anti-racist" would only fear the potential revolutionary mix of Pendragon's alienation from the system and his white supremacist views. Noel saw more complex possibilities.

Hal Adams

Chicago

February 14, 1996

### WELL...

The exchange with the NatSoc was brilliant and important.

Phil Lapsansky

Philadelphia

April 1996

### LOYAL LEFT

I thought your editorial on militias was really good. I think you're totally right about the "loyal left" clinging to state power to save them from an armed working class instead of struggling with that sector of the working class toward a politics of freedom.

Joel Olson

Minneapolis

November 8, 1995

### WELL-REASONED

Although I suspect you're going to take a lot of flak for it, I thought your well-reasoned and measured editorial on the militias

in issue #5 was the best article I have yet seen on the militia phenomenon. In fact, I have xeroxed several copies of the editorial and posted them to friends and contacts overseas precisely because you managed to point to the real if contradictory tendencies underlying the growth of the militias without superficially dismissing them in horror as so many on the conventional liberal-left have so far done.

I help edit *Collective Action Notes* (*RT* readers can write for a sample at POB 22962, Baltimore, Maryland 21203) and because *CAN* is often described in journals such as *Factsheet Five* without using the traditional political terms, it is interesting to note that we receive many requests for exchanges from militia-oriented groups.

Curtis Price  
Baltimore, Maryland  
February 1996

## INTRANSIGENT OPPOSITION

*RT* 5 looks good. I liked the editorial on the militia movement. It's a sad day when intransigent opposition to the state is viewed as the exclusive property of fascists. I also found your exchange with the National Socialist interesting.

Gary Modenbach  
New Orleans  
November 5, 1995

## WHAT IT IS

Having read #5, including and even especially its editorial, I want to know more. The premises upon which the journal seems to be based are ones which cannot be ignored by anyone with a

proletarian, downright human, perspective on this world. We must truly go beyond the notion of race, but without ignoring what race still means in our world (i.e. "color blindness" at the workplace, classroom, etc. is ineffectual at the very least). We must deal with it as opposed to ignoring it. We must go to its roots and tear it out of our social context. This is, at least for me, in no way different from the struggle to abolish wage labor or to similarly radically transform this social context. All things are connected in this world of alienation.

I understand that the fifth issue provoked a number of angry responses. To this I wish to say only that the journal affirms itself. It is what it is. And if a true radicality scares off the liberals, then all the better. The courage and honesty of a radical critique will always make many friends and enemies.

B.W.

Pennsylvania

March 17, 1996

## **ANTI-SEMITISM?**

I can't speak for Jews and I can't even speak for all Afrikans, but I can speak my personal opinions. Jews must realize and acknowledge that every time someone speaks honestly about some transgression of some Jews that that in itself doesn't make the person anti-semitic. For instance, my father worked for Jews all of his life. He worked at a department store. First it was a clothing store and then it became a furniture store. I can remember my father training whites/Jews right out of high school and they would be promoted over my father, whereas my father had been on the job for twenty or thirty years. If I mention that does that make me anti-semitic? I didn't like that shit at all and I was always trying to get my father to quit the job but he wouldn't because he had a



family to feed. I would be very upset if someone called me anti-semitic simply because I mentioned how my father was treated by people who happened to be Jews.

Jews should stop becoming hysterical and irrational when someone mentions something negative about a particular Jew or Jews. As long as Jews attack Farrakhan and other legitimate leaders in the Afrikan/Black community, the relationship between the Afrikan community and the Jewish community will be strained or worse. The more Farrakhan is condemned by Jews and other whites, the more Afrikans embrace him.

Richard Mafundi Lake

Atmore-Holman Prison, Alabama

February 26, 1996

## **ACADEMIC OOZE**

Your editorial on militias makes critical points no one else is making (at least not on the wimpy liberal left, the ooze in which academics are obliged to live).

Alan Wallach

Washington, DC

November 15, 1995

## **DON'T ASSUME I'M WHITE**

To the Editors:

Because I am very blond, people are constantly making assumptions about me and my ethnicity, and thereby, I believe, attempting to bond with me in ways I find very objectionable. After reading some of your materials, I had a personal experience while in court, waiting with another attorney (white male) to see the judge. We were carrying on some small talk, when he asked me

where I lived. I responded "Altadena" (a town north of Pasadena, the majority of which is populated by people of color, and which had recently had some well-publicized gang activity, as well as a senseless shooting of a 12-year-old who was exiting his school bus, also well-publicized in the newspapers). This other person said, "Altadena? Oh, you must be the only white person living there!" I hesitated very briefly, and responded, "I believe you are assuming facts not in evidence." He said, "What's that?" I said, "First of all, you're assuming I'm white." The impact was immediate, with the other attorney obviously uncomfortable, and the conversation basically ending at that point.

Patricia A. Swayne

Altadena, Cal.

November 3, 1995

## **RACE TREASON**

Here is a slightly edited letter I wrote to some friends the day after an incident I now view as one of the foundations of my incipient race treason. Until that moment I suppose I was a member of the white "club," having never questioned it before.

Dec. 7, 1988

Yesterday we drove south of New Orleans to see the Delta country. After doing laundry and exploring, we stopped in a bar. A leathery old guy started talking to me, telling me he could tell I had a lot of class. He seemed nice enough, bought us a couple of drinks. He said he was from Panama, and was a boxer.

Eventually he started in about boxing and how his people can take care of the lightweights but their greatest hope was that one of my people would take down the big niggers. He continued like this for a while, alternately praising me as a really classy guy

and laying harder and harder into the "niggers" with all the standard racist trash. I kept silent and the rest of the people in the bar (oil workers I stereotyped as rednecks) were starting to get interested. Suddenly I said, "Did you know that my father was a Black man?" [Ed.: This was not, in fact, the case.]

His immediate reaction was stunned confusion. When he recovered he told me that I should never reveal my racial taint to anyone -- that I had too much class. I said I wasn't ashamed. He responded that if that were so, then I was trash too.

We left shortly afterwards without incident. Louisiana is a strange place.

Dan Tenenbaum  
Seattle

## BEWARE OF ACADEMIC FASHION

You must be pleased to see how fashionable the "construction of whiteness" has suddenly become as a scholarly approach, thanks to the fine work you and your colleagues have been doing. No doubt you are also concerned to keep it from being merely an academic fashion, rather than a political program (the fate, alas, of Black Studies, Women's Studies, and Marxist theory).

Carolyn L. Karcher  
Washington, DC  
February 3, 1996

## AND NOW THE EDITORS REPLY

**Note:** Since so many of the letters were in response to Noel Ignatiev's exchange with NSWPP member Pendragon, the editors decided it made sense for Noel to reply in the first person.

In response to Ted Allen, I am an "official" of nothing; consequently, nothing I say is "official." Although Arthur Pendragon's first letter to me was not written on NSWPP letterhead, it was not difficult to tell where he was coming from. I answered him on the urging of a close friend and supporter of *RT* who formerly sympathized with national socialism. I continued to write because Pendragon's letters challenged me to think about some of my views and formulate them more precisely than I had previously. *RT* published the exchange for the benefit of our readers; our aim was to show that national socialism is oppositional, even revolutionary, and that it possesses a comprehensive world view and morality that its opponents had better take seriously. Any effect the exchange produces among national socialists will be purely incidental. It never occurred to us to demand a reciprocal publication agreement that we have no way of monitoring or enforcing.

Ted's question about ethnic distinctiveness seems relatively peripheral to the main issue between us, and I prefer, therefore, to leave it for another time.

He writes that recognition of the centrality of the struggle against white supremacy is sufficient to define a revolutionary strategy. We disagree: there still remains the question, what should people who hold that view *do*? One thing we think they should *not* do is turn themselves into bloodhounds and pointers for official repressive agencies, under the pretext of opposing white supremacist groups.

In our editorial we noted that many of today's militia members must have been former Jesse Jackson voters. In pointing this out we did not intend to express support for Jackson or the Rainbow Coalition. We were offering evidence that, wherever those militia members stand now, they could not have been motivated principally by white supremacy. If the anger and yearning for change that initially stirred them has been corralled by

organized fascists, the reason is in part because the so-called anti-racists have failed to link themselves with a revolutionary vision, but instead have projected themselves as allies of, or at most a pressure group within, official society. As we said, we think such a course fatal.

Ted points out, and we agree, that an opening to either "Total Change" or "Rainbow Coalition" alone would be self-defeating. But then he asserts that the only way to link them is to persuade the "angry whites" who support the militia movement of the positive value of the non-revolutionary aspects of the Rainbow Coalition. Why? Would he try to persuade Rainbow supporters of the positive value of the non-anti-white-supremacist aspects of the militia movement?

Although we share ideas with both the Rainbow Coalition and the militia movement, we belong to neither. Moreover, we reject the whole scheme of "direct action, writing books, propaganda of word and deed, and mass struggle for partial demands." We aim to define a new political current, that understands the centrality of the fight against white supremacy in revolutionary strategy and the need for a revolutionary approach to the fight against white supremacy. Why should that project cause him discomfort?

Phil Rubio properly questions whether there exist "guiltless whites." But having established the complicity of *all* whites with the system of white supremacy, where are we? Does he propose to write off the people he calls the "'right' rank and file" (a category that, so far as we can see, includes just about all white folks in the country, the exceptions being a handful of self-proclaimed "leftists" and a dwindling number of liberals)? To label them a reactionary monolith solves the problem of how to talk to them. But if Orrin Hatch can fight for popular hegemony, why not the new abolitionists? We believe that to succeed they must draw a categorical line between themselves and official society. We are aware that to the

extent the militia movement has formulated a world view, it is not ours. The aim of our editorial was not to mobilize support for the existing militias, but to criticize those on the "left" (by now a virtually meaningless term) who seek shelter in the arms of the state.

Moreover, it is not so clear that the militia movement equals the "right." In this connection we cite two recent news reports: the first, from the Boston *Globe* (Feb. 11, 1996), later picked up by the *New York Times*, is an account of a meeting called by Carolyn Chute, author of *The Beans of Egypt, Maine* and other books, with the aim of forming a militia group. "Many other militias and many individuals blame gays, blacks, Jews, Spanish-speaking folks, welfare mums, illegal drugs, seat belts, schools without prayers, women with shoes, abortions, environmentalists, unseen Communist forces and so-called liberals," she writes. "The whole of America is squabbling over these details while huge corporations smilingly take more than 50 percent off the top of the Federal budget for subsidies including outright handouts for researching new business opportunities in other countries where they can exploit foreign workers like they exploit us, all in the name of free enterprise and individual rights." Among those in attendance at the first meeting were a punk rocker, a retired plumber, a student, an artist, a Vietnam War conscientious objector, and a young Jewish man.

The second item is a report from the Toledo *Blade* (January n.d. 1996) of a black Detroit man who is forming a militia group. He sees it as a vehicle to battle an illegal court system and a corrupt elite class that cheats the common people and keeps black people down with drugs. When asked about the white supremacist backgrounds of some militia leaders, he replied, "Maybe there is some racism. If all they know is what they see about black people in the media, how can they help it? Once we sit down at the table, we'll work it out."

I did not intend, in my correspondence with Mr. Pendragon,

to suggest that Jewish privilege existed outside of Israel. But since Peter Bohmer brought up the subject, I will say that I think U.S. Jews do enjoy a privilege apart from the privileges of whiteness; it consists largely in being able to invoke the "holocaust" against those who disagree with them on any issue. It is not very important, probably no more important than the discrimination Jews actually suffer as Jews. Jews are not the only people in this country who seek to trade on past sufferings in order to gain dispensation in the present: Irish refer constantly to the Famine and the "No Irish need apply" signs, and Armenians bring up the Genocide at every opportunity. This victim-game is based on the spurious claim that today's recipients of white-skin privileges are members of the same groups that suffered the atrocities of the past. They are not; in America they are *whites*, members of the favored race. And yes, Jews whine; the whine is the dominant tone in American political discourse, and Jews are part of the chorus.

What purpose would be served by my attempting to argue with Mr. Pendragon about the fact of the extermination of European Jewry? Could anything I say convince him that it had occurred, after mountains of books, articles, photographs, and documentary films had failed? Is Bohmer concerned that Pendragon's argument, left unanswered, might lead astray the readership of *RT*? I am glad that the Supreme Court takes a more restricted view than Bohmer of what constitutes obscenity.

If there is something distinctive in the Jewish tradition that produces radicals, is there something in the condition of Jewish life today that gives rise to neo-conservatism, a political trend largely the creation of Jewish former radicals? While Bohmer is claiming credit for Marx and Rosa Luxemburg, is he also willing to accept responsibility for Norman Podhoretz and Irving Kristol? Is the question further evidence of my anti-Semitism?

Bohmer raises three more criticisms of me. Whatever merit

they may have, here they are mere shots fired at a stationary target, or insertions for the record. I'll have my say on them another time.

The letter from Name Withheld underscores something I noticed during my exchange with Pendragon, that a National Socialist seemed more decent on a human level than many of those on the left I've been debating for twenty-five years. Name Withheld is right about one thing: we do think the militia are not very different from the rest of white America. But we never said they are not to be particularly feared; in fact we explicitly said the opposite: they are armed, and white people with guns are always dangerous.

We agree with George Scialabba as to the folly of seeking to impose by force policies that are actively opposed by the majority of the populace. But his view is schematic; revolution is not an event that occurs on the day the revolutionaries gain fifty-percent-plus-one support. Revolution is a process, and public opinion is shaped by militant minorities who are able to "give a life/ In the world of time and space among the bulks of actual things/ To a dream that was dreamed in the heart" (Padraic Pearse). We mounted our call "to arms" not with the expectation that we could overturn the government with our present forces but to indicate a way of developing a credible alternative to the existing society, a necessary part of changing "the moral sentiment of the nation."

As Rich Rees notes, historically there has been a link between civil rights and the federal government. The extent to which it still exists is open to question, and moreover it is a bit late for new abolitionists to allow it to determine their strategy.

To Brian Brasel, good luck with your 'zine. Non-commercial publications are welcome to reprint anything from *Race Traitor*, provided they credit the source.

We thank all those who wrote. Controversy linked with practical activity is the best protection against academic fashion.



# ROUTLEDGE

## **Race Traitor**

Edited by  
**Noel Ignatiev**  
and **John Garvey**

"*Race Traitor* is among the strongest, funniest and most politically charged critiques of whiteness to appear since slave storytellers spun out the "Master and John" tales. Throughout its brief existence as a just-above-ground journal, it has combined penetrating articles on the history and sociology of race with inspired manifest, telling cultural commentaries and frontline reports from the struggle to abolish whiteness."

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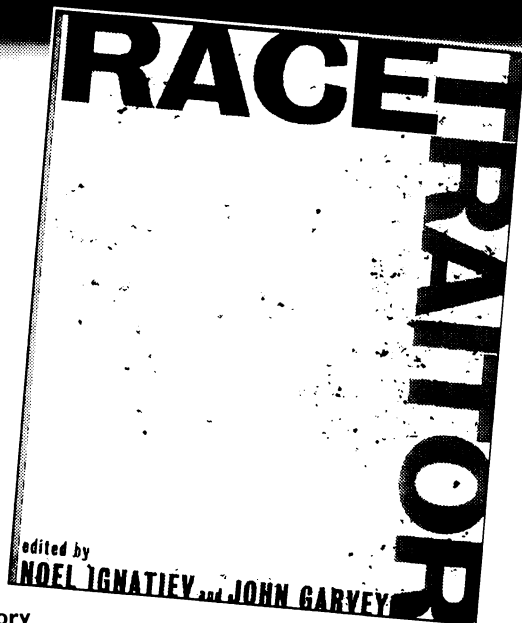
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# WHAT WE BELIEVE

**The white race is a historically constructed social formation.** It consists of all those who partake of the privileges of the white skin in this society. Its most wretched members share a status higher, in certain respects, than that of the most exalted persons excluded from it, in return for which they give their support to a system that degrades them.

**The key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race, that is, to abolish the privileges of the white skin.** Until that task is accomplished, even partial reform will prove elusive, because white influence permeates every issue, domestic and foreign, in U.S. society.

The existence of the white race depends on the willingness of those assigned to it to place their racial interests above class, gender, or any other interests they hold. The defection of enough of its members to make it unreliable as a predictor of behavior will lead to its collapse.

**Race Traitor** aims to serve as an intellectual center for those seeking to abolish the white race. It will encourage dissent from the conformity that maintains it and popularize examples of defection from its ranks, analyze the forces that hold it together and those that promise to tear it apart. Part of its task will be to promote debate among abolitionists. When possible, it will support practical measures, guided by the principle, **Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity.**

**The editors publish in Race Traitor that which they think will help build a community of readers. Editorial opinions are expressed in editorials and unsigned replies to letters.**

**journal of the  
new abolitionism**